

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

Issue 66—February 2023



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Welcome

Hello and welcome to Issue 66!

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The first international break of the year is nearly upon us and we are excited to see how our home nations get on.

It came as a surprise that Kenny Shiels announced his departure from Northern Ireland, he's been an amazing addition but here's to the next chapter.

We have an amazing issue ahead for you.

Emily Keogh looks at the impressive job Carla Ward is doing at Aston Villa, Jamie Davies previews the major international tournaments happening in February, we launch our incredible competition in conjunction with Schools Football Week and Simon O'Neill chats to Amber Barrett about her career so far.

We will be heading to the Arnold Clark Cup and England's U23s game against Belgium at Prenton Park so look out for us and say hello!

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief

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BARCLAYS WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

London Football Awards nominees announced



Daniela Porcelli / SPP

The London Football Awards, sponsored by Toscafund, has officially announced the nominees for the 2023 awards ceremony.

Arsenal dominate the nominations in both the men's and women's game, with Mikel Arteta up for Manager of the Year; Aaron Ramsdale nominated for Goalkeeper of the Year; and Beth Mead and Kim Little nominated for FA Women's Super League Player of the Year against the likes of Chelsea's Sam Kerr and Millie Bright.

The London Football Awards, now in its 9th year, celebrates the achievements of players, clubs and initiatives taking place in London from across the year.

The nominees, and eventual winners, have been selected by a panel of judges made up of ex-players, broadcasters and professionals from across the footballing pyramid. The 26-person judging panel for 2023 includes the likes of former players Bobby Zamora and Tony Cottee; esteemed broadcasters Jacqui Oatley and Dickie Davis; and Bob Wilson OBE, ex-Arsenal legend and founder of the Willow Foundation.

Commenting on the nominees, Wilson said: "It's been an incredible season so far for players and clubs across London, so being able to honour them at our ceremony this year give us immense pride. It gets harder every single year to decide on these nominees, with the standard of football on show getting higher with each season that goes by. Every nominee would be a worthy winner and we look forward to celebrating with them all in the coming weeks."

All proceeds from the awards go to Willow, the UK's only national charity providing Special Days and Specials Treats for seriously ill young adults aged 16 to 40 years old when they are needed most. The charity was founded by Bob Wilson and his wife Megs following the death of their daughter Anna from cancer aged 31.

The 2023 London Football Awards will be held at the Roundhouse on Monday 13th March.

Nominations

WSL Player of the Year (22/23 Season)

- Beth Mead – Arsenal
- Kim Little – Arsenal
- Sam Kerr – Chelsea
- Millie Bright – Chelsea
- Dagný Brynjarsdóttir – West Ham

Women's Young Player of the Year (22/23 Season)

- Lauren James – Chelsea
- Asmita Ale – Tottenham Hotspur
- Isibéal "Izzy" Atkinson – West Ham

Manager of the Year (22/23 SEASON)

- Mikel Arteta – Arsenal
- Richie Wellens – Leyton Orient
- Emma Hayes – Chelsea Women's
- Thomas Frank – Brentford
- Marco Silva - Fulham

Goal of the Season (22/23 SEASON)

- Heung-Min Son - Spurs vs Leicester - 17-Sep
- Michael Olise - Crystal Palace vs Man Utd - 18-Jan
- Ismalia Sarr – Watford vs West Brom - 08-Aug
- Paul Symth - Leyton Orient Vs Doncaster - 08-Oct
- Laura Wienroither - Arsenal Women's vs Man Utd Women's - 19-Nov

Carla Ward's Vision: Creating Aston Villa's Masterplan



Sports Press Photo

By Emily Keogh

Aston Villa has been one of those clubs, mid to low table, struggled to maintain momentum and really put it up to the big teams. But things seem to have taken a turn for the Birmingham based side, as boss Carla Ward has cracked the code to stacking her team with experienced, internationally capped talent, with young, hungry fresh talent that's seen her team take points from teams like Manchester City. Their race for fifth place is on.

Aston Villa are a few seasons away from reaching a top three spots but this season marks a change for Villa as they're battling for that ever coveted fifth spot, to solidify their place in the top half of the table. Aston Villa have only been in the WSL since the 20/21 season. Last season placed ninth, the season before they finished tenth. They're currently in sixth, two points

behind Everton, one point ahead of West Ham. Despite being knocked out of the Conti Cup three nil to Arsenal in the quarter finals, they're through to the FA Cup fifth round after an 11-0 win. But it's all eyes on the league for the Villains who have had a frankly awful run with injury the past few months.

But what has changed to see Villa climb up the table, knock points off leading teams and be in with a chance of top a top five finish? Undeniably, it's Carla Ward's vision and plan for her team. There are three key themes in Carla Ward's vision: Rachel Daly, Signature Signings and Adaptability of the team.

Rachel Daly

Rachel Daly's influence is one that cannot be argued. Her wealth of experience, both for clubs and country is invaluable to any team. Daly returning to

the WSL was one of the most anticipated moves. The 2022 Euro winner became a fan favourite and came back to England after playing in the NWSL in America. But on her return, Ward made the shock play to move Rachel Daly up top, moving her from a full back into an attacking position, a move that has seen Rachel Daly become joint top goal scorer in the WSL so far. She's making a play for the Golden Boot award in the league but it is undeniable that Daly's introduction to the team has been pivotal in the teams growth and is one of the main reasons that Aston Villa are sitting high up on the table.

Signature Signings

Aston Villa have used their transfer windows exceptionally well. Bringing in a host of domestic and international talent to bolster their roster and fill in gaps for their bad luck with injury.

Like a match made in heaven, the linkup between Daly and Kenza Dali has been most impressive and influential for Villa. Capped internationally for France 49 times, Dali flitted about the WSL, playing for West Ham and Everton before moving to Aston Villa in summer 2022. She was just one experienced, highly skilled and influential players to move to Aston Villa, joining the likes of Swiss international Alisha Lehmann, Scottish star Rachel Corsie, Northern Ireland capped Simona Magill, Aussie Emily Gielnik and Wales's own Natasha Harding, making up the Villians wealth of experience.

To add to this, January 2023 brought one of England's most decorated players to Aston Villa in the form of Jordan Nobbs. The 30-year-old has had a tough luck with injury but prior to this, was capped 69 times, scoring eight goals and spent 12 years at Arsenal where she made 270 appearances, scored 81 goals and won 12 titles. Alongside Nobbs, they also signed Lucy Staniforth, another highly decorated England player who was previously at Manchester United. The pair add to Ward's stacked side and both have already made exceptional contributions for the team.

But it was Carla Ward's plan to combine this with young talent like Olivia McLoughlin, Evie Rabjohn, Laura Blindkilde, Chantelle Boye-Hlorkah, Freya Gregory and Kirsty Hanson (on loan from Manchester United). These youngsters have made waves pairing up with the older players, advancing their ability and knowledge and are some of England's brightest stars.

Anna Leat, a young New Zealand goalie, signed in the summer of 2022 and has an impressive run so far. In combination with their consistent keeper in Euro's winner Hannah Hampton, the pair have managed to keep Villa afloat, only conceding 21 goals in 11 matches in the WSL. Whilst the numbers may seem high, for a team that conceded 40 in 22 matches, they show a vast improvement. Both young players but both with international experience top off Ward's team.

The vision Carla Ward had to be able to combine these two age groups effectively, for them all to be able to learn from each other and develop individually whilst working harmoniously on the pitch has been second to none.

Adaptability on the field

Villa have suffered immensely from injury. Magill notably suffered an ACL injury in Northern Ireland's opening game of the 2022 Euros and Remi Allen tore hers during a game against Manchester United last season. Both have yet to make an appearance this season as their rehab continues. Republic of Ireland's Ruesha Littlejohn has had a flurry of injuries, limiting her on pitch time massively. Chantelle Boye-Hlorkah also suffered an ACL injury during a Conti Cup game against Everton. Natasha Harding has also been out with a rupture to her quad whilst youngsters Evie Rabjohn and Freya Gregory have picked up injuries so far this season.

With several major players out long term, movements were made on pitch, rotating regularly throughout games to work around the injury spells.

Their effectiveness is only shown through a win and a draw over Manchester City and wins over Tottenham Hotspur and Reading to name a few.

In other games, Rachel Daly resorted to a full back position to cover for players being cup tied and an injury to Dan Turner, a game which also saw Sarah Mayling move in as a centre-half, Alisha Lehmann play a spell at the back and a heavy rotation on pitch to accommodate those missing and the substitutes making an appearance. Despite losing the game, the ability to make the moves that Ward did only show the extent of the adaptability this team has on the pitch.

The future for Villa

The above topics all fall under the umbrella of Ward's vision- vision to move Daly uptop, to combine experience with young talent, to move her team around when injury struck.

The sky is the limit for a team stacked with talent, a manager giving it her all and endless opportunities to ruffle feathers in the league.

As Aston Villa make a play for fifth spot, and other teams encroach on their advance, the second half of the season is keep your eyes glued to.



Pedro Soares / SPP

Match of the Month: Manchester United 6-0 Liverpool



James Whitehead / SPP

By Abbie Smith

January 15th, Leigh Sports Village, home of the victorious Red Devils. The stage was set for the mighty Northern derby, Manchester United versus Liverpool. The home side went into battle in a 4-2-3-1, with Mary Earps between the sticks and Alessia Russo as a lone attacker. The dynamic trio of Lucía García, Ella Toone, and Nikita Parris pulled the strings in midfield. The visitors opted for a 5-4-1, with Belgian Yana Daniëls leading the line.

After only six minutes, García opened the scoring after a well-timed cross from maestro Ona Batlle. She scored a tap in from the penalty spot, the ball

taking a deflection from Liverpool's Gemma Bonner, sending goalkeeper Rachael Laws the wrong way.

In the 24th minute, Hayley Ladd's quick thinking won United back the ball in their opponents' half. Toone picked up the scraps and threaded Russo through on goal to score from the edge of the box.

Toone and Russo's partnership is electric, both complementing the other on and off the pitch. It is as if their footballing minds are connected, Russo knowing exactly where Toone is going to ping the ball without communication. The combination of Toone's silky footwork with Russo's clinical finishing is that of footballing

legacy, with the pair making an instant impact no matter the occasion, as seen during England's Euro 2022 campaign. Manchester United have an iconic partnership on their hands, one that could arguably be the catalyst for them winning the 2022/23 WSL title.

Batlle's second assist of the game came in the 41st minute. Ladd connected with another exquisite cross from the Spaniard, heading the ball downwards into the bottom corner from just outside the six-yard box, giving United a 3-0 lead before half time.

A little after 60 minutes, United got their 4th. Batlle took on Megan Campbell, driving past

the defender to slot the ball right into the feet of Millie Turner. Turner's shot, originally spinning out wide, was deflected in by new signing Emma Koivisto, taking Laws by surprise.

Another goal prompted United's Marc Skinner to make a double change, bringing on Maria Thorisdóttir for Hannah Blundell, as well as Martha Thomas for Lucía García.

Two minutes after coming onto the pitch, Thomas made it 5-0.

Toone's magical cross looped away from the Liverpool defence, giving Thomas the freedom to burst into pocket of space and cheekily chip Laws.

Defensive duo Leighanne Robe and Rachel Furness made their way into the game after previous substitute Sofie Lundgaard failed to make an impact on the scoreline, leaving Liverpool trailing and desperate for a way back.

But, United didn't stop there. Bringing on skilled attackers Adriana Leon and Vilde Bøe Risa in place of Parris and Toone respectively, the home side continued to drive away at the Liverpool defence. In the dying embers of the game, Alessia Russo departed to make way for Rachel Williams

and in the 84th minute, United got their opening.

After a brilliant interception, Ladd used her pace to outsmart Missy Bo Kearns and curl a far-post cross into the box. Williams rose above her markers, heading the ball home and clinching the three points for Manchester United.

League leaders Manchester United dominated the game in all aspects. The Red Devils had 19 shots, with Liverpool only managing 4. They claimed 72% of the overall possession compared to 28% from the away side, keeping the ball well and spraying key passes across the pitch. United look safe and composed on the ball, rarely making mistakes, or giving away the ball recklessly, shown by their passing accuracy of 86% and 580 completed passes throughout the 90 minutes.

Battle's selflessness has landed her with the 3rd most assists in the WSL (6), behind only teammate Toone (7) and Chelsea star Guro Reiten (9). Katie Zelem also appears in joint 4th place with Arsenal's Caitlin Foord, both players on 5 assists.

Thanks to Mary Earps' safe hands, United have kept 9 clean sheets in 12 matches, the most in the WSL so far this season. This is the reason

Earps is consistently England's first choice goalkeeper and the one responsible for helping the Lionesses achieve a year-long streak without losing a match. The team's back line is solid; Millie Turner and Maya Le Tissier are a vital cog in United's well-oiled machine.

Team sheets:

Manchester United: Mary Earps, Ona Batlle, Maya Le Tissier, Millie Turner, Hannah Blundell (Maria Thorisdóttir 70'), Katie Zelem, Hayley Ladd, Lucía García (Martha Thomas 70'), Ella Toone (Vilde Bøe Risa 77'), Nikita Parris (Adriana Leon 77'), Alessia Russo (Rachel Williams 79').

Liverpool: Rachael Laws, Emma Koivisto, Gemma Bonner (Leighanne Robe 77'), Niamh Fahey, Megan Campbell, Taylor Hinds (Sofie Lundgaard 65'), Shanice van de Sanden (Missy Bo Kearns 46'), Ceri Holland (Carla Humphrey 85'), Jasmine Matthews, Melissa Lawley, Yana Daniëls (Rachel Furness 77').

Yellow cards: Shanice van de Sanden (45'), Katie Zelem (49'), Gemma Bonner (53').

Goals: Lucía García (6'), Alessia Russo (24'), Hayley Ladd (41'), Emma Koivisto (OG) (63'), Martha Thomas (72'), Rachel Williams (84').



Blues snatch a late winner at the Emirates

Sam Kerr came to the rescue for Chelsea when she helped her side to a 1-1 draw against Arsenal with an 89th minute equaliser at a packed Emirates Stadium.

The Gunners had gone ahead in the 57th minute when captain Kim Little tucked away a rather controversial penalty.

The spot-kick was awarded after Chelsea's Niamh Charles fouled Caitlin Foord, but replays show the incident was outside the box, calling for a bigger push to introduce VAR to the WSL.

Exciting transfer window for Aston Villa

Villa confirmed two huge signings during the January transfer window with midfielders Jordan Nobbs and Lucy Staniforth joining Carla Ward's squad.

The duo, signed from Arsenal and Manchester United respectively, will bring experience and stability to the side who are pushing up the WSL table in the hope of a top-half finish.

A huge win for Man United over bitter rivals Liverpool

United continue their excellent form in the WSL with a substantial 6-0 win over Liverpool at the Leigh Sports Village.

Goals from Lucia Garcia, Alessia Russo, Hayley Ladd, Martha Thomas, Rachel Williams and an own goal from Emma Koivisto gifted United a win that will stay in their memory.

Big January signings for both North London sides

Arsenal have signed Danish international Kathrine Kuhl from FC Nordsjælland, with Victoria Pelova also joining the Gunners from Ajax.

Both signings will be crucial to the squad with Beth Mead and Vivianne Miedema side-lined with long-term injuries.

Rivals Tottenham Hotspur have also made a huge signing with striker Beth England joining for a record fee from Chelsea.

Leicester bag their first points of the season

The Foxes claimed a long-awaited victory over Brighton when they secured a 3-0 home victory over the Seagulls.

Goals from Monique Robinson, Aileen Whelan and Sam Tierney secured all three points with the latter making her 50th appearance for the club.

Women's World Cup ticket sales go through the roof

The tournament in Australia and New Zealand this July has seen an unprecedented rush for tickets, with over half a million sold already.

Australia's game with the Republic of Ireland is set to be moved to the 83,500-seater Stadium Australia due to such a high demand.

Alessia Russo nominated for Puskas award

The England star has been nominated for the prestigious award for her backheel against Sweden at EURO 2022.

Lyon's Amandine Henry has also been nominated for her goal against Barcelona in the Champions League final, with Salma Paralluelo the third woman to make the list for her Liga F goal for Barcelona against Villarreal.

England duo join match official line-up at World Cup

English assistant referees Natalie Aspinall and Sian Massey-Ellis will feature in Australia and New Zealand this summer.

Aspinall will join forces with 54 other assistant referees selected while Massey-Ellis is one of 19 video match officials.

Wales' Cheryl Foster and England's Rebecca Welch join the team of 33 referees for the tournament. The latter became the first women to referee a men's Championship fixture, taking charge of Birmingham and Preston.

White card used for the first time in professional football

The card was shown in a Portuguese women's cup match where Benfica beat Sporting Lisbon 5-0.

The introduction of the white card is part of a new initiative by FIFA to give recognition for positive actions and was shown to the medics who had helped an unwell fan in the stands.

Juventus star Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir wins breakthrough maternity pay ruling

The Icelandic international has won a claim against her former club Lyon for failing to pay her full salary during pregnancy.

The club failed to abide by FIFA rules which state players are entitled to a minimum of 14 weeks' maternity leave at two-thirds of their salary.

Gunnarsdottir has described the case as a "wake-up call" for all clubs.

Manchester United to return to Old Trafford in March

United's WSL fixture against West Ham will take place on Saturday, March 25 and will be their first match of 2023 at the Theatre of Dreams.

Marc Skinner's side have a 100 per cent winning record at the stadium and recorded a 5-0 win over Aston Villa in the only other fixture held there this season.

Chelsea and Liverpool WSL clash abandoned after six minutes

The decision has sparked a discussion on the safety of players after the fixture initially went ahead at Kingsmeadow, despite a frozen pitch.

The game was played in tricky conditions with many players slipping on the freezing surface, leading to referee Neil Hair abandoning the match.

Tottenham and Leicester, and Brighton against Arsenal was the other WSL postponed because of frozen pitches.

Ian Wright & Emma Hayes to be honoured



Legends of Football, in aid of Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy, is to induct Arsenal and England hero Ian Wright and Chelsea Women's FC manager, Emma Hayes into its Hall of Fame later this year at a star-studded event at London's Grosvenor House on 2nd October 2023.

Arsenal's former record goalscorer and the five-time FA Women's Super League winner will be officially unveiled at the prestigious event this autumn, joining an esteemed list of recipients including Pelé, David Beckham, Arsène Wenger and most recently, England manager, Gareth Southgate and Lioness hero, Ellen White.

On accepting the award, Ian Wright said, "It's an absolute honour to receive the 2023 Legends of Football award. To be recognised alongside some of the game's greatest figures in the Legends of Football Hall of Fame, including my old boss, Arsène Wenger is unbelievable.

"Music has been so powerful for me throughout my life and career, and to see how Nordoff Robbins use music to help people connect and communicate is truly special. I'm really looking forward to a great night of football, music and fundraising at Grosvenor House in October."

On the announcement of her award, Emma Hayes said, "I'm thrilled to be recognised amongst some of the biggest names in the game and can't wait to join the illustrious company in the Legends of Football Hall of Fame. I'm delighted to accept the award alongside a true footballing legend in the shape of Ian Wright and look forward to celebrating on the night.

"It's an honour to be associated with such an amazing charity like Nordoff Robbins, they play a hugely important role in improving the lives of people across society through music. Music therapy is such a creative way of communicating with people, and I hope any money raised through the

event can continue to support the incredible progress that's been made so far."

Described by Sir Alex Ferguson as "the best night in the football social calendar", the Legends of Football event is an annual charity fundraising night, supported by the Premier League, in aid of music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins. The event has raised a staggering £8.5 million to date since 1997 when John Charles CBE was the first recipient.

Geoff Shreeves, Sky Sports presenter and Legends of Football chairman commented, "We're delighted to be honouring Ian Wright and Emma Hayes, both fitting recipients of the 2023 Legends of Football award. As one of the greatest marksmen of his generation, Ian's career was truly legendary. Prolific throughout England's football pyramid, he took the path less trodden to become Arsenal's greatest goalscorer, winning the Premier League and FA Cup twice as part of an

unparalleled era of success at the club.

“Emma’s Chelsea sides have been the standard bearers of women’s football in this country for the best part of a decade, with Emma at the forefront of their phenomenal success throughout. Her passion for the game knows no bounds and her influence on the sport in this country and across the world is seismic, with Emma’s ferocious work-rate and determination playing a huge part in making the women’s game what it is today. Hers and Ian’s induction into the Legends of Football Hall of Fame is thoroughly deserved and we’re delighted to have them both on board as ambassadors for Legends of Football and Nordoff Robbins.”

Having played amateur Sunday league and semi-professional football until the age of 21, Ian Wright signed his first professional contract with Crystal Palace just before his 22nd birthday in 1985. Over the next six years he went on to score 117 goals for The Eagles, making him the club's record post-war goalscorer and third on the all-time list. In 2005, he was voted into the club’s Centenary XI and was named as Crystal Palace’s “Player of The Century”.

In September 1991, he signed for Arsenal for a club-record fee of £2.5m before going on to be the club's top scorer for six seasons in a row. He played a major part in the club's success during the 1990s, winning an FA Cup and League Cup double in 1993, scoring in both the FA Cup Final itself and the replay against Sheffield Wednesday.

Under Legends of Football alumni, Arsène Wenger,

Wright went on to win the league and cup double in the 97-98 season. On 13 September 1997, he broke Cliff Bastin's club record of 178 to become Arsenal's all-time top scorer with a hat-trick against Bolton Wanderers.

Wright represented England on 33 occasions after making his debut in February 1991 in a 2-0 victory over Cameroon at Wembley before making his final England appearance against Czech Republic in 1998. Wright went on to help England qualify for the 1998 World Cup by scoring two goals in the 4-0 qualifying campaign victory against Moldova at Wembley in September 1997, before producing arguably his best performance for his country in the vital 0-0 draw in Italy, a month later, which secured his country's passage through to the finals. Shortly after his retirement from playing in 2000, Wright was awarded an MBE for his services to football.

A career ending injury at the age of 17 put a halt on Emma Hayes’ promising playing career, leading her to undertake European Studies, Spanish, and Sociology at Liverpool Hope college and later complete a master’s degree in Intelligence and International Affairs.

Emma went on to manage in the US before taking on the Chelsea FC Women’s job in 2012, before winning the Women’s Super League title in 2015, the club’s first major title. In her 10-year tenure at the West London club, Hayes’ Chelsea side have dominated the Women’s Super League, winning the title in six of the last eight seasons as part of 13

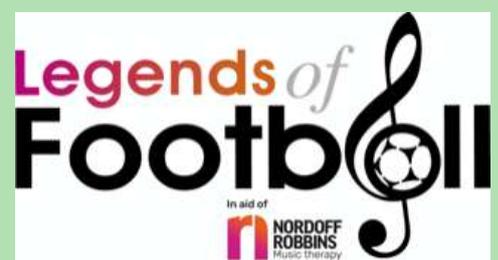
trophies won since she joined Chelsea, including a domestic treble in 2020-21.

Hayes’ side were one game away from an unprecedented quadruple as she guided The Blues to the 2021 UEFA Women's Champions League Final, becoming only the second English team to reach the showpiece final. Last summer, at Buckingham Palace, she received an OBE from Prince William, Prince of Wales for her services to football and also won The Best FIFA Women's Coach Award for 2021.

Sandra Schembri, CEO, Nordoff Robbins, said: “Music and sport go hand in hand, and we can't wait to be back at Grosvenor House for this year's Legends of Football ceremony, with Ian Wright and Emma Hayes as our incredibly worthy recipients.

“On behalf of Nordoff Robbins, I’d like to thank Ian, Emma and everyone involved in the event for their hard work and dedication – every penny raised goes directly towards our music therapy delivery, helping us to create space for people to express themselves and connect with others through the power of music.”

Legends of Football will honour Ian Wright and Emma Hayes at a star-studded event on 2nd October 2023 at Grosvenor House, London.



Alex Scott: How not to be strong



Liam Asman/SPP

By Aisling Hannon

Alex Scott is one of the most recognisable names in women's football, but has worked extremely hard to get to where she is today. Her newly released autobiography titled 'How Not To Be Strong', details the hardships in her life, and subsequently those for other female athletes. She is an incredible ambassador for the women's game and continues to be an icon for young girls getting into the sport.

Her story is a fascinating one – full of the highs and lows of everyday life, but simultaneously with the weight of being a female sports star followed by being a pundit on national TV. It makes for a rather remarkable read.

Scott started her playing career with Arsenal as a right-back in 2002, with appearances for Birmingham City and Boston Breakers in between. Her 140 appearances for England speaks volumes about how talented she was, with an incredible career and legacy left behind.

She claimed plenty of honours in her lengthy playing career, including five FA Women's

Premier League titles and a Champions League with the Gunners. Scott also helped England to a third place finish at the FIFA World Cup in 2015 and a quarter-final spot for Great Britain at the 2012 Olympics.

Rather incredibly, such a significant playing career came long before women's football was on the high pedestal it is now. In her final playing days for Arsenal, the club were seeing crowds of between one and three thousand, but fast forward five years and those figures are hitting close to 50,000, and in the men's stadium too.

Scott's bravery and resiliency on the pitch is evident, but off the pitch, it is of course more personal. Her book tells it all. What I loved about it was the honest, non-filtered facts of how she coped with difficult scenarios in her life, and not just regarding her broadcast or playing career. The manner in which she reflects on her early family life and relationships, and the subsequent lessons she has learned, is a valuable piece of guidance for us all.

Being a role model doesn't come easy, and it is evident in her

writing how difficult it was, and still is, for her to be a prime figure on national television, especially when covering the men's game.

She speaks openly about the trolling and racist comments she received when appearing on certain shows. Becoming the first female presenter of Football Focus in 2021 was never going to be easy, but her fighting spirit and ability to overcome obstacles are both huge factors in her success.

The book is a beautiful reminder that if you set your mind to something, you can achieve anything. Her story about being awarded an MBE is so touching. Bringing her mum and nan to the ceremony was a given, but she explains bringing her young niece was a lesson – she wanted to show that young girl how much can be achieved in life.

Alex continues to dominate our screens and is a leading figure in driving more and more support to the women's game. Her words are certainly worth reading, and as she demonstrates in her book - strength is finding your voice, defying expectations and taking chances.

Barclays Women's Super League Winter Transfers

Arsenal



In: Victoria Pelova (Ajax), Kathrine Kühl (FC Nordsjælland), Sabrina D'Angelo (Vittsjo)

Out: Jordan Nobbs (Aston Villa)

Renewed: Beth Mead (December 2022)

Loan: Anna Patten (out - Aston Villa), Mana Iwabuchi (out - Tottenham), Fran Stenson (out - Sheffield Utd)

Aston Villa



In: Jordan Nobbs (Arsenal), Lucy Staniforth (Manchester United)

Out: Isobel Goodwin (Coventry United), Mary McAteer (Coventry United)

Renewed: Olivia McLoughlin (pro deal - October 2022), Sarah Mayling (January 2023)

Loan: Elisha N'Dow (out - Charlton), Anna Patten (in - Arsenal), Kirsty Hanson (in - Manchester Utd) Sian Rogers (out - Charlton), Olivia Rabjohn (dual registration - Coventry

Utd), Olivia McLoughlin (out - Birmingham City)

Brighton & Hove Albion



In: Guro Bergsvand (SK Brann), Dejana Stefanovic (Valerenga), Brianna Visalli (Houston Dash), Zoe Morse (Chicago Red Stars), Lydia Williams (PSG)

Out: N/A

Renewed: Lula Jarvis (December 2022)

Loan: Jorja Fox (in - Chelsea), Frances Angel (dual registration - Lewes)

Chelsea



In: Maika Mamano (INAC Kobe Leonessa)

Out: Bethany England (Tottenham)

Renewed: Reanna Blades (pro deal - October 2022), Jess Carter (October 2022), Jessie Fleming (November 2022), Erin Cuthbert (November 2022), Sophie Ingle (December 2022), Melanie Leupolz (January 2023),

Aniek Nouwen (January 2023)

Loan: Jorja Fox (out - Brighton), Aggie Beever-Jones (out - Everton), Emma Thompson (out - Lewes), Maika Hamano (out - Hammarby) Aniek Nouwen (out - AC Milan), Charlotte Wardlaw (out - Lewes)

Everton



In: Clare Wheeler (Fortuna Hjørring)

Out: N/A

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Jess Park (in - Manchester City), Emily Ramsey (in - Manchester Utd), Aggie Beever-Jones (in - Chelsea), Kenzie Weir (out - Lewes)

Leicester City



In: Remy Siemsen (Sydney FC), Georgia Eaton-Collins (UCF Knights)

Out: Demi Vance, Georgia Brougham

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Carrie Jones (in - Manchester Utd), Sophie Barker (out - Sheffield Utd), Lucy Wood

(out - MK Dons), Mackenzie Smith (out - Nottingham Forest), Charlie Devlin (out - Birmingham), Sophie Poor (out - Loughborough Lightning), Ellen Jones (out - Coventry United), Janina Leitzig (in - Bayern Munich), Connie Scofield (out - Coventry United), Courtney Nevin (in - Hammarby IF), Ruby Mace (in - Manchester City), Natasha Flint (out - Celtic)

Liverpool



In: Gemma Bonner (Racing Louisville), Sofie Lundgaard (Fortuna Hjørring), Fuka Nagano (North Carolina Courage), Miri Taylor (Angel City)

Out: Gilly Flaherty (retired), Rachel Furness (Bristol City)

Renewed: Hannah Silcock (pro deal—October 2022)

Loan: Ashley Hodson (out - Birmingham), Charlotte Clarke (out - West Brom), Lucy Parry (out - Hibernian), Tash Dowie (in - Reading)

Manchester City



In: N/A

Out: Vicky Losada (AS Roma)

Renewed: Alex Greenwood (December 2022)

Loan: Ashley Hodson (out - Birmingham), Charlotte Clarke (out - West Brom), Lucy Parry (out - Hibernian), Tash Dowie (in - Reading)

Manchester United



In: Jayde Riviere, Lisa Naalsund (SK Brand)

Out: Lucy Staniforth (Aston Villa)

Renewed: Ella Toone (November 2022), Millie Turner (January 2023), Safia Middleton-Patel (pro-deal - January 2023), Jess Simpson (pro-deal - January 2023)

Loan: Emily Ramsey (out - Everton), Ivana Fuso (out - Bayer Leverkusen), Kirsty Hanson (out - Aston Villa), Carrie Jones (out - Leicester), Tara Bourne (out - Birmingham), Chloe Williams (dual registration - Blackburn Rovers), Niamh Murphy (dual registration - Blackburn Rovers), Keira Barry (out - Derby County), Grace Clinton (out - Bristol City), Estelle Cascarino (in - PSG), Jade Moore (out - Reading)

Reading



In: Easter Mayi Kith (Kristianstads)

Out: N/A

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Jade Moore (in - Manchester United), Tash Dowie (out - Liverpool), Chloe Peplow (out - Southampton)

Tottenham Hotspur



In: Bethany England (Chelsea)

Out: N/A

Renewed: Ria Percival (January 2023), Jess Naz (February 2023)

Loan: Eleanor Heeps (out - Coventry Utd), Gracie Pearse (out - Bristol City), Mana Iwabuchi (in - Arsenal), Esther Morgan (out - Sunderland), Scarlett Williams (out - Billericay Town)

West Ham



In: Amber Tysiak (Oud-Heverlee Leuven), Anouk Denton (Louisville Cardinals), Shannon Cooke (Louisiana State University)

Out: Thea Kyvåg (LSK Kvinner), Claudia Walker (Birmingham City), Alex Hennessy (Charlton Athletic), Grace Garrard (Stabæk)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Amalie Thestrup (in - PSV), Brooke Cairns (out - Ipswich Town), Halle Houssein (dual registration - Gillingham), Keira Flannery (dual registration - Gillingham)

Match of the Month: Arsenal vs Chelsea

By Paul Donegan

Sam Kerr headed in a late equaliser for Chelsea as they drew 1-1 away at London rivals Arsenal.

Kim Little had given the home side the lead from the penalty spot as the top two in the WSL at the start of the day took on each other at the Emirates Stadium in front of 40,000+ fans.

Jonas Eidevall named Arsenal's new January signings, Victoria Pelova and Kathrine Kuhl, and the returning from loan, Gio, on the bench. There were three changes from their last match which was a 9-1 win against Zurich in the UEFA Women's Champions League. Emma Hayes made one change from Chelsea's last match, when they beat Paris Saint-Germain 3-0 in the Champions League, with Jessie Fleming coming in for Fran Kirby.

There was a good atmosphere inside the Emirates throughout the match. Chelsea were defending the goal the sun was shining towards in the first half. Chelsea's Lauren James had the first chance in the 6th minute when she went on a powerful run forward which ended with a shot wide. The home sides first effort came four minutes later when Stina Blackstenius played in Lina Hurtig but her shot was saved by Zecira Musovic.

Arsenal had another chance a minute later when Caitlin Foord's shot from an angle was saved. Musovic made another save in the 13th minute to keep out Hurtig's effort. The Gunners were defending well with Leah Williamson and Rafaelle both making important blocks. Frida Maanum had the hosts next opportunity in the 21st minute but her shot from the edge of the area was saved.

It was Chelsea's chance to defend well in the 30th minute when Kadeisha Buchanan headed

behind a Lia Walti shot. Hurtig had another effort a minute later but this time she shot into the side netting.

Chelsea ended the half well and had a couple of corners around the 38th minute mark, and then with the final action before half time, Kerr headed a corner wide.

The first chance of the second half went Arsenal's way when Hurtig's headed was saved and then caught by Musovic in the 54th minute.

Arsenal were awarded a penalty two minutes later when Foord and Niamh Charles tangled as they went into the area. Referee Emily Heaslip, who was in a good position, gave the spot kick after Foord went down. Little made no mistake from 12-yards to give the home side the lead.

The Gunners had a couple of chances to extend their lead over the next ten minutes with Maanum shooting wide and Foord having an effort saved.

Chelsea made a couple of substitutions with Eve Perisset and Kirby coming on and at the same time they changed formation to 3-5-2. This led to a period of chances for the away side with Erin Cuthbert seeing a shot deflected wide in the 66th minute, then Magdalena Eriksson saw an effort go over seconds later. James shot over from the edge of the area a minute later. It was all Chelsea now with Kirby putting an effort wide in the 69th minute, then Sophie Ingle sent a powerful shot from 18-yards just wide.

Arsenal came close to going further ahead in the 74th minute though when Steph Catley's cross was tipped onto the crossbar by Musovic just as Blackstenius was running in at the far post.

That was to prove to be the Gunners last real chance of the match

as Chelsea had the better of the last 15 minutes. Eriksson saw a header from a free kick saved in the 77th minute, which was the visitors first effort on target of the match. Perisset sent a shot into the side netting in the 88th minute.

The equaliser for the Blues did come in the 89th minute when second half substitute Jelena Cankovic sent in a superb cross which was powerfully headed into the net by Kerr.

Line ups

Arsenal (4-2-3-1)

Zinsberger, Wienroither, Williamson, Rafaelle, Catley, Little (c), Walti, Hurtig (McCabe 80'), Maanum, Foord, Blackstenius,

Substitutes

D'Angelo, Wubben-Moy, Beattie, Maritz, Gio, Pelova, Kuhl, Iwabuchi

Goal – Little 57' pen

Booked – McCabe 88'

Chelsea (4-2-3-1)

Musovic, Charles (Perisset 62'), Buchanan, Bright, Eriksson (c) (Rytting Kaneryd 86'), Ingle (Cankovic 80'), Cuthbert, James, Fleming (Kirby 62'), Reiten, Kerr

Substitutes

Berger, Carter, Svitkova, Mjelde, Abdullina

Goal – Kerr 89'

Booked – James 39'

Referee – Emily Heaslip

Tickets sold - 46,881



The exciting life of a superfan

By Lydia Charles, age 9

Hi everyone, my name is Lydia. I play for Preston North End (PNE) and I am a massive Manchester United fan. Follow my season as I play, watch and fall more in love with football.

For the love of playing

Recently, playing for PNE has been fantastic.

We won 9-3 in our most recent game and I am so proud of how far we have come. Our passing and awareness on the pitch is really coming together.

We are constantly progressing every week, and getting more ambitious and we are focusing on the areas we need to improve. We are now near the top of our league and are ready to face our next opponent. I am hoping we will get another great result.

Dominance over Liverpool

On January 15, we went to Leigh Valley Sports Village for the Barclays Women's Super League (WSL) game against Liverpool.

It was INCREDIBLE.

Liverpool had just moved back into the WSL this season and we were ready and raring to go.

We had a brilliant line up, in defence we had Ona Battle, Maya Le Tissier, Millie Turner and Hannah Blundell. Katie Zelem and Hayley Ladd were in centre midfield with Lucia Garcia and Nikita Parris as wingers and Ella Toone in Midfield.

Finally upfront we had Alessia Russo.

The substitutions were Maria Thorisdottir, who came on for Hannah Blundell, Martha Thomas who came on for Lucia Garcia, Vilda Boe Risa who came on for Ella Toone, Andriana Leon who came on for Nikita Parris and Rachel Williams who came on for Alessia Russo.

The only bookings were Katie Zelem with a yellow card and for Liverpool Bonner and Van De Sanden both with yellow cards.

There was some outstanding skills on the pitch, and they really inspired me to put what I see into training for PNE. There were also some cracking goals for United, the result was 6-0!

The first goal was in the 6th minute. Scored by Lucia Garcia assisted by Ona Battle. United's second was scored by Alessia Russo in the 24th minute and assisted by Ella Toone with the third was scored by Hayley Ladd in the 41st minute and assisted by Ona Battle.

United carried on their impressive performance in the second half. The fourth goal came from an own goal from Emma Koivisto in the 63rd minute.

The fifth goal was in the 72nd minute by Martha Thomas and assisted by Ella Toone. Finally, the sixth goal was scored by Rachel Williams in the 84th minute assisted by Hayley Ladd and I can tell you they were all fabulous goals.

It was great to see manager Mark Skinner encouraging the girls. They all worked together to get those six goals and I think it is important to remember that it doesn't matter if you win or lose as long as you have given it your all then you will always be a winner.



Games picked for February television schedule

OKX BRAND AMBASSADORS



OKX, one of the world's leading technology and Web3 companies and home to the world's second largest cryptocurrency exchange by trading volume, today announced it has partnered with Manchester City Football Club stars Jack Grealish, Rúben Dias, İlkay Gündoğan and Alex Greenwood to launch the OKX Collective, an immersive metaverse experience designed specifically for fans.

The OKX Collective is a unique virtual metaverse environment that allows fans to experience Web3 first-hand and gain access to special content, experiences and rewards from some of their favourite Manchester City players.

Fans who visit the OKX Collective will be treated to special experiences designed around each player's playing style and personal interests.

These will include exclusive training content and music and NFT-based digital experiences. Haider Rafique, Chief Marketing Officer at OKX, said: "Introducing elite footballers to our newly established metaverse is about sharing the boundless possibilities of Web3 and inviting fans to experience it first-hand. Web3 has the potential to be bigger than everything that came before it, and this is just a taste of the incredible experiences it stands to enable. Let me take this opportunity to welcome Jack, Ruben, Ilkay and Alex to both the OKX family

and the incredible world of Web3!"

Jack Grealish said: "Manchester City and OKX are both winners. Combining football and the metaverse brings fans closer to the action! I've had a lot of fun bringing my digital profile to life with the support of the Club and OKX."

Alex Greenwood said: "I'm excited to be teaming up with OKX and heading into the metaverse for the first time. We talk a lot about the evolution of football, and it feels as though exploring this space is the next step.

"There's some exciting things to come with this partnership... especially if you like your trainers and digital collectibles!"

Ilkay Gündoğan said: "Football is all about community, and City fans are the best in the world, so we know the OKX Collective will be an incredible place. I've been following developments in Web3 for some time. I can't wait to learn even more with OKX and bring fans closer to the action."

Rúben Dias said: "I am delighted to team up with OKX. By giving my fans a glimpse into how I prepare for matchday I hope to showcase the power of the metaverse and continue learning in this fast-moving space. Can't wait to see what's next!" OKX is also the official training kit partner for MCFC for the 2022/23 season.

U23s to watch in 2023

By Emily Keogh

With 2023 swiftly upon us, here are nine under 23 year olds to keep your eye on this year.

Izzy Atkinson



A young Irish forward who is a regular impact substitute for West Ham has had a great season so far with only more to come. Whilst she has not been regularly starting for the team, she has come on at pivotal points, being a reliable substitute and has even won games for the side in doing so.

Her only goal this season came from an 88-minute winner in the one-nil win over Leicester City after she was subbed on in the 63rd minute. Before moving to West Ham, Atkinson was at Scottish club Celtic for a year following a four-year stint at Women's National League side, Shelbourne and made her seniors debut for the Republic of Ireland at just 16-years-old. The young talent is gaining in minutes, experience and is an up-and-coming front runner and one to keep watch on ahead of the Women's World Cup in Australia in summer 2023, following Ireland's qualification for the tournament.

Lily Woodham

An impressive young Welsh talent, Lily Woodham's name has already been dotted about. She began her career at Bristol City before moving to Reading in 2018



where she's made over 50 appearances for Kelly Chamber's side. The left-back did a spell on loan to Championship side Charlton Athletic, picking up 7 appearances and a goal in 2019.

Adding her name to Wales's international set up, Woodham made her way through the age groups before debuting for Wales's seniors team in 2020. On a dream debut, she also scored her first goal for the side in their 4-0 win over the Faroe Islands. A vert talented defender, Woodham has been pivotal to Reading's rocky season so far and ahead of the Pinatar cup, she's one to keep an eye on.

Olivia McLoughlin



A young talent who signed her first professional contract with Aston Villa but began her career at rivals, Birmingham City where she was named 2019/20 under-16 players' player of the year. She made her WSL debut at just 17 had has been a regular substitute for Carla Ward's side since, having great impact when she does step on the pitch.

In the recent January transfer window, McLoughlin made the loan move back to Birmingham City. An upcoming star, bursting with talent is one to watch, especially now she's playing in the Championship as Birmingham City continue their promotion run.

Emily Ramsey



Everton's Emily Ramsey has more saves in the WSL than any other keeper. On loan from Manchester United, she has been pivotal between the sticks, helping to keep Everton's goals conceded to just 12 in 11 matches. This being her fourth loan in four season, it has arguably developed Ramsey's game immensely. Working with a variety of different players at her various clubs, facing a range of different goal scorers may play a role in how well rounded she is for a goal keeper at just 22 years of age.

She is one Sarina Weigman should keep her eye on for a future Lionesses call up after manging to keep Arsenal to just a one-goal win, despite having many shots on target- a true talent in goal.

Aggie Beever-Jones



Another Everton loanee, Aggie Beaver-Jones was a product of Chelsea's academy who made her debut for the Blues in January 2021 and signed professionally for the club in the following July.

Beaver-Jones, similarly to a lot of other youngsters spent time on loan at a championship club to boost their minutes and made a brilliant impact for BWC side Bristol City, making 26 appearances, scoring 7 goals.

During this current season, she was loaned to Everton as the side attempted to consolidate their fifth-place spot. A firecracker on the pitch, who's goal against West Ham is notably one of the best of the season so far.

Shannon O'Brien



Leicester City's campaign this season has not got off on the best footing. Yet to gain a point and residing currently in the relegation spot, the team has, safe to say, had a rough start but one player, playing out of her usual positioning is Shannon O'Brien who signed for the Foxes back in 2021.

She primarily plays as a centre forward and should reside there more often as one of Leicester City's leading goal creators but is incredibly versatile also featuring as a right midfielder, central attacking midfielder and striker.

Last season, she led Leicester City in chances created and assists whilst placing second for goals and shot creation for the club. She strides ahead in Leicester City's squad as one of the most creative and diverse players and will be pivotal to Willie Kirk's campaign

to remain in the Women's Super League.

Mary Fowler



One of Australia's most promising young star, Mary Fowler has not featured much for Gareth Taylor's Manchester City side but when she has, has made immense impact.

At only 19 years old, Fowler has European recognition, spending two years at Montpellier scoring 10 goals in 40 appearances before moving to the WSL at the start of the 2022/23 season.

In 2021 she was named in ESPN's 21 under 21, an international list of footballers representing the next generation of talent, highlighting her on and off pitch impact on the game. On the international stage, Fowler was called up to the FIFA Women's World Cup at just 16 and made her Olympic debut against New Zealand in 2020.

One that deserves more time on the pitch, keep your eyes on her, big things are coming for the young Matilda.

Kenzie Weir



A young Scottish talent, Kenzie Weir has not made many appearances for Everton but after signing a three-year deal in

summer 2022, she is one that is set to grow into the game.

Coming from a football family, being the daughter of Scottish legend, David Weir, the defender has 10 caps and a goal for the Scottish under-19 team where her talent and technical ability has began to shine.

Ruby Mace



Ruby Mace began her career with Arsenal, coming up through their academy and signing professionally for the North London side in 2020, making her debut against rival Tottenham Hotspur in September 2020.

She moved to a dual registration with Birmingham City in 2021 where she scored two goals in 11 appearances. She then chose to leave Arsenal and signed a three-year deal with Manchester City where she began to show why she is one of England's brightest young talents.

Whilst on under-19 international duty, she picked up a thigh injury leaving her side-lined for a period of time. Like other youngsters going on loan, Mace signed on loan for Leicester City in the recent transfer window as they battle to avoid relegation.

Mace's addition is set to be pivotal for the Foxes as she aims to get more minutes under the belt and help the team escape relegation.



Games picked for March television schedule



The Football Association has confirmed that Sky Sports and BBC Sport have made their broadcast selections for Rounds 14 and 15 in March, with four games selected across two weekends.

Leigh Sports Village will open the month's fixtures when current league leaders Manchester United welcome Leicester City in front of the BBC cameras. The match will kick-off at 12.30pm on Sunday 5 March on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer.

Later that day, Chelsea will welcome Brighton & Hove Albion to Kingsmeadow on Sky Sports Football and Sky Showcase. The match is scheduled for 6.45pm, although the fixture is subject to Chelsea's progress in the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup.

A further two matches will take place the following weekend on Sunday 12 March, with Chelsea again at home at Kingsmeadow, as they welcome Manchester United to South London. The match is scheduled for 12.30pm on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer.

To round off the live fixtures, Arsenal will welcome Reading to Meadow Park in front of the Sky cameras, with the match taking place at 6.45pm on Sky Sports Football and Sky Showcase.

Remaining Barclays Women's Super League matches will be streamed on The FA Player.

The Barclays Women's Championship has also

seen three games selected for live broadcast on The FA Player in March. Charlton Athletic will host Southampton at The Valley on Sunday 5 March, with Sheffield United hosting Crystal Palace at Bramall Lane the following week on Sunday 12 March.

To conclude the live fixtures, London City Lionesses will welcome Bristol City to Princes Park on Sunday 19 March. All fixtures are scheduled to kick-off at 2pm.

Fixtures

Barclays Women's Super League

Sunday, March 5: Manchester United vs Leicester City, 12.30, BBC

Sunday March 5: Chelsea vs Brighton & Hove Albion, 18.45, Sky Sports

Sunday, March 12: Chelsea vs Manchester United, 12.30, BBC

Sunday March 12: Arsenal vs Reading, 18.45, Sky Sports

Barclays Women's Championship

Sunday March 5: Charlton vs Southampton, 14.00, FA Player

Sunday, March 12: Sheffield United vs Crystal Palace, 14.00, FA Player

Sunday, March 19: London City Lionesses vs Bristol City, 14.00, FA Player



 **BARCLAYS**
WOMEN'S
SUPER LEAGUE

	Club	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1	Chelsea	12	10	1	1	35	11	24	31
2	Manchester United	12	9	2	1	31	6	25	29
3	Arsenal	11	8	2	1	26	6	29	26
4	Manchester City	12	8	2	2	25	11	14	26
5	Everton	12	6	1	5	16	12	4	19
6	Aston Villa	12	5	2	5	17	22	-5	17
7	West Ham	13	5	1	7	15	22	-7	16
8	Liverpool	11	3	2	6	13	22	-9	11
9	Tottenham	11	3	0	8	14	22	-8	9
10	Brighton & Hove Albion	10	2	2	6	12	33	-21	8
11	Reading	13	2	1	10	14	29	-15	7
12	Leicester City	11	1	0	10	5	27	-22	3

Table correct as of February 5, 2022



BARCLAYS CHAMPIONSHIP

Republic of Ireland international Kyra Carusa joins London City Lionesses



London City Lionesses are thrilled to announce the arrival of forward Kyra Carusa on a permanent transfer from HB Køge, the two-time champions of Denmark.

The Republic of Ireland international joins the Pride with an impressive résumé which includes appearances in the UEFA Women's Champions League, Danish Elitedivisionen, and American NCAA.

"It's always been a dream of mine to play in England," said the 2022 Elitedivisionen Most-Valuable Player. "And I have always said that I want to be a part of a programme that is doing something historic or playing for something bigger than wins and losses.

"I feel like London City is a programme that really met the requirements and the standards that I was looking for. I didn't want to miss out on the opportunity to do something historic again and that's why I'm here.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to compete, play highly competitive games, and make a difference for London City right off the bat."

The 27-year-old joins London City after securing a historic repeat with HB Køge, for whom she recorded 43 goal contributions (30 goals, 13 assists) in 57 top-flight appearances at the Capelli Sport Stadion.

Carusa also enjoyed a productive career at the collegiate level, amassing 78 goal contributions (35 goals, 33 assists) in 94 appearances for

Georgetown University and Stanford University.

"It's fantastic news for the Club," said interim head coach Nikita Runnacles. "This is a player who we have been watching for a couple of years and have been excited about the prospect of her potentially becoming a London City player.

"We're delighted to get this over the line and for her to feature at a really crucial point in our season. Her character reflects the values of the Club, with how she is and what her personal ambitions are.

"We're excited to see what she can produce here. I'm sure she will fit in quickly and be ready to put on a London City shirt as soon as possible."

San Diego-born Carusa, who qualifies to represent the Republic of Ireland through her grandparents, has scored twice in eight appearances for the Girls in Green, with her success stemming from her penalty area prowess.

"She works hard," Runnacles said when asked to describe the Irishwoman's key attributes. "We know that we're going to get work-rate and leadership on and off the pitch, but her goalscoring, creativity, and hold-up play speaks for itself.

"She's going to be a really exciting player for us, which will add a couple more dynamics to how we play."

Lee Burch: “There’s been a light at the end of the tunnel”



Words: Peter Mann

Images: London City: thoughtsofawing

Coventry United: Jeff Bennett

Well, January quickly became a month of surprises in the Barclays Women’s Championship, didn’t it? Just ask those connected to table-toppers, London City Lionesses, and basement club, Coventry United.

In London, the shock story broke early in the month that Melissa Phillips had left the club, with immediate effect, to become assistant coach back home, in her native USA, with National Women’s Soccer League franchise, Angel City.

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the table, Lee Burch’s Coventry side, having come close the previous week when at high-flying Bristol City, picked up their first league win of the season, when home to Crystal Palace, coincidentally by the same score, and with two players netting in both.

London City Lionesses

Melissa Phillips had been with the capital outfit since 2020, becoming Head Coach in the October of that year, becoming instrumental in the clubs’ continued growth and success, on, and off the pitch.

This season alone, Phillips, and her backroom team which includes interim replacement, Nikita Runnacles, led them to the top of the table, and into the Vitality Women’s FA Cup Fourth Round, ultimately losing a local derby with Women’s Super League hosts, Tottenham Hotspur.

Holder of a UEFA A Coaching Licence, and a USSF A Senior Licence, a return home was, ultimately, too good an opportunity to ignore, Phillips saying: “It is with great sadness and sincerity that I am stepping down from the position as Head Coach at London City.

“I am so grateful for the board entrusting me with their vision over the past few years.

“It has been a journey from the inception of the club to where we are now and I’m so incredibly proud of every person, players and staff, who have contributed to the successes along the way.

“Personally, and professionally, I feel it is right for me to pursue opportunities back home.

“This has been an incredibly tough decision and one I haven’t taken lightly.

“However, I feel the staff, players and processes we have in place are so strong that they will continue to keep the club on the current trajectory.

“I have so much care and respect for every person at London City.

“With such strong vision and values, I know the Club can establish itself to be a successful Women’s Super League entity and serve the women’s game for years to come.”

During her time at the Lionesses, Phillips led them to sixth (2021) and runners-up

(2022), over her two, full seasons, whilst in the pandemic-halted 2020 season the club finished in fourth, leaving them in first place.

For the record, Angel City, who Phillips is joining and are led by Buckinghamshire-born, Freya Coombe, finishing eighth during the last, 2022 campaign.

Perhaps utilising the move as a potential link-up between the London, and Los Angeles clubs, the Lionesses founder and chairwoman, Diane Culligan, added: “We see this as the beginning of an exciting relationship between two clubs who share very similar vision and values.

“Melissa has done a fantastic job for London City Lionesses over the last two and a half years, especially in leading the development of the on-field product.

“We appreciate that she has been presented with an amazing opportunity to return to her home in California and evolve her career with ACFC.

“We believe that, rather than this being the end of London City’s fantastic relationship with Melissa, this represents an opportunity for her to be the bridge between two pioneering pillars of women’s football on either side of the Atlantic.

“We take the responsibility in shaping the growth of women’s football very seriously and we’re pleased that Melissa is going to a club with similar ambitions on the world stage.

“Football has a fantastic way of shaping human behaviour, driving positive societal and cultural change.”

Phillips’ move stateside coincides with Angel City’s soon-to-begin pre-season schedule, and ahead of the 2023 NWSL campaign, which will begin, in earnest, in late March.

Coventry United

At the opposite end of the table, Lee Burch’s Coventry side are quickly putting the pains of the first half of the season to bed in the first month of this year.

An opening day, lone-goal defeat at home to Bristol City was followed by league defeats to Crystal Palace, Sheffield United (8-0, away), Birmingham City, London City (5-0, home), Blackburn Rovers, Lewes, Southampton, Durham (5-1, home), and Sunderland (5-0, home), as they endured a ten-match, winless run.

Some respite did however arrive in the cups, a 2-0 win at home to Southampton (WSL Cup) and a 4-2 success over visiting Stockport County (Women’s FA Cup), being understandable highlights, Ebony Wiseman having netted in both of those.

The winter break though, it came on the back of another, heavy loss, this time when home to Reading in the WSL; however, the turn of the year, it has seen the proverbial wind of change blow over Burch, and his charges.

High-flying Bristol City was to be Coventry’s first game of 2023, and, although Chloe Bull opened the scoring for the hosts, inside ten minutes, the lowly visitors struck back to lead, with a little under ten minutes remaining, thanks to second half efforts from



Eleanor Ryan-Doyle (67) and Mary Grace McAteer (82).

Was this to be their best chance of league success this season, gone? The quick answer, a firm NO!

“Everyone saw what happened here, what had gone at the club, last season, and that there’s a massive rebuild happening, now,” explained Coventry boss, Lee Burch.

“We’ve had to work really hard this season and we believe we’ve got better as the seasons’ wore on, but just couldn’t get those first points on the board.

“We’re continuing to push towards our goals though, and have never really had a run of bad performances, so, the end of last year, we felt we had enough in us to keep going.

“It’s been the same with the cup results, they’ve offered light at the end of the tunnel, when we needed it most.”

“I’ll not say it was easy, because it wasn’t,” divulged captain, Jodie Bartle, who re-joined Coventry in the summer from Scottish outfit, Celtic.

“There’s been so many difficulties, and Lee (Burch) has had to build a new team, in such a short time.

“We’re a close-knit group, but it’s been hard, difficult, turning up each week with our chins on the floor, but we’ve carried on.

“(This season) we’ve noticed the occasional, 3-2 scores, but I feel that game against Birmingham (a 3-2 defeat in late September) was where the belief started to grow, and where our attacking nous came in.

“Then the Blackburn game (another 3-2 reverse, a month later), that was a frustrating one for us and probably the best, second half, we’ve played; it was the same against Lewes a week later as well.

“Thankfully though, we’ve turned a corner now, and we needed that winter break, both mentally, and physically, whilst the club was busy behind the scenes, bringing in new players to help the fight.”

Having already led the Championship earlier in the season, second-placed Bristol City had won seven and drawn two of their first, ten games (including two, narrow wins over Coventry), that sole defeat for them being a 1-0 reverse at home to Birmingham, in mid-November.

For Coventry though, that second, Bristol defeat, upon a return to action, was a tough one for them to take, Burch adding: “An influx of new players here has given us a new mentality, and an increase in player performance.

“The game with Bristol, that was a free hit for us really, and the majority of the players hadn’t even met prior to the game, so, overall, we were unfortunate more than anything.

“It did lay the foundations, and we need to push on from that, especially as they were throwing everything at us late in; but, it’s the little things that affect outcomes, and we didn’t dwell on it.”

“It was a learning curve for us, and we’d not been in a winning position like we were, so it was something we had to just, deal with,” continued defender, Bartle.

“It was a difficult result to take but the belief and confidence in this group of players is something I’ve had all season.

“Once we’d digested what had happened though, we went into the Place game, full of confidence, and at what was probably the best time we could have faced them.

“Confidence, that’s key though, and the new players here have helped with that.”

Then, a week after that, heart-breaking, stoppage-time loss at Bristol, the then, point-less Coventry, welcomed mid-table Crystal Palace, and found themselves racing into a two-goal lead.

By the interval, that had stretched to 3-1, and the hosts were in dreamland as goals, for the second successive game, from McAteer (3), and Ryan-Doyle (42), were placed either side of a twentieth minute effort from Katy Morris.

Annabel Blanchard grabbed a late second for Palace, but Coventry held on for a much-needed, valuable, three points, and, in turn, moved them closer, much closer, to that of Sheffield United (eight points), and Durham (twelve points), two sides in a mini free-fall of late.

“When we conceded the first goal (against Palace), it was like, ‘Oh no, not again,’” admitted Bartle.

“But it was a fantastic game, and now we have to do the same again, and again, whilst hoping the sides above us aren’t winning, then let’s get out of this relegation scrap and not do the same as last season.”

I was pleased that we managed to beat Palace, and that’s like

out fourth, 3-2 this season,” added Burch.

“We went into the game with a clear game-plan, and it worked, from our point-of-view, but that’s just the one game, we need to do it again, like five, six, seven times.

“We know we have to go out there and win games, we can’t just go for a point here and there, because everything can change very quickly, we just need a little momentum on our side.”

And the rest...

Around the rest of the Championship, and with London City, pre-Phillips’ departure, easing to a 5-0 win away to Palace themselves, in the first game back off the winter break, Karin Muya’s brace keeping them out in front at the top as their, top-of-the-table clash, with Bristol, was postponed a week later.

Lewes, and Birmingham, meanwhile, they both registered 1-0 wins on the road, at Southampton, and Sheffield United, respectively, and, whilst Sunderland’s form has picked up, Durham’s continues to slip, the two, north-east outfits, entrenched in the bottom five.

Back in mid-August, and on the opening weekend of the season, first half goals saw the spoils shared, 1-1, in the first, River Wear derby of the season, between Durham, and visiting Sunderland.

The return though, on Wearside, in the first of the New Year, would see Melanie Reay’s hosts edge a five-goal thriller, thanks to a late winner from Katy Watson, it arriving with a few minutes remaining.

Durham would be seen to take the lead after fifteen minutes, Sarah Wilson with the opener, but the sides went in level at the break courtesy of Elizabeta Ejupi’s equaliser; Rio Hardy restored the visitors’ advantage, from the spot, just after the hour mark, and it stayed that way until the closing, ten minutes.

Abby Holmes popped up to equalise, for a second time, with eight minutes remaining, before Watson snatched what proved the winner for the Black Cats, at the death, the victors’ assistant coach, Steph Libbey, saying afterwards that: “That there were some massive positives that came out of that game.

“The resilience of the group – we went down twice and got back in the game and we were able to see it through and that shows really good character and togetherness that we’ve got and we need to build on that.”

Victory for the Black Cats, over Durham, was quickly followed up with a 3-1 win at Birmingham, goals coming via Emily Scarr, Jessica Brown, and Grace McCatty, they registering their third, successive league win; Durham meanwhile, they endured a hard, goalless draw, when home to Southampton,

now winning just one of their last six in the league.

Into February now, and Coventry alone will be looking to get something from games with Charlton (a), Blackburn (h), along with continued progression in the FA Cup; Durham, they need something from outings against Sheffield United (h) and Crystal Palace (a), and in the upper echelons of the division, London will look to dust off the fall-out from the Phillips departure when home to Sunderland, and away to Birmingham, whilst Bristol will aim to keep up the pressure from their games with Blackburn (a) and Lewes (h), before the run-in picks up steam, from March onwards.

Meanwhile, six, Championship sides, have made the fifth round of this season’s FA Cup, Charlton and Birmingham opposing each other on 26 February after they saw off Wimbledon (5-1) and Everton (1-0) respectively.

Durham will face Manchester United, again, after they won 3-0 at home to Crystal Palace, Lewes entertain Cardiff City following a 1-0 win at Ipswich Town, Coventry United travel to Brighton after they defeated Hashtag United 4-0, and Bristol City, they face a plum home game, against Manchester City, the Championship side progressing 4-0 at home to Oxford United, whilst City, they inflicted a seven-goal demolition on visiting Sheffield United.



Signings for Birmingham

Claudia Walker and Olivia McLoughlin have joined Birmingham City during the January transfer window.

Walker has resigned for the club, joining from West Ham United where she has spent the last 18 months. McLoughlin has joined on loan for the remainder of the season from Aston Villa.

Leaving Birmingham are Fran Stenson who was recalled from loan by parent club Arsenal, Eleanor Ryan-Doyle and Mollie Green have both joined Coventry United on loan, whilst Delphi Cole has joined West Bromwich Albion on dual-registration.

Furness joins Bristol City

Bristol City have brought in three new players during January. Gracie Pearse and Grace Clinton have both joined on loan until the end of the season.

Pearse joins from Tottenham Hotspur whilst England under-23 international Clinton moves from Manchester United. Rachel Furness has also joined the club following her departure from Liverpool.

Furness was part of the Liverpool squad that won the Women's Championship last season.

Furness made her debut in a 0-0 draw against Blackburn Rovers by coming off the bench with 15 minutes to go.

Rovers contracts renewed

Chloe Dixon and Nicola Worthington have both signed new contracts with Blackburn Rovers during January.

In what was a quiet transfer window for Rovers, the only new player to join the club is midfielder Annie Hutchings who moves from Manchester City on dual-registration.

Hennessey joins on free transfer

Alex Hennessey has joined Charlton Athletic on a free transfer after leaving her previous club West Ham United. The 18-year-old attacker started at Arsenal and also spent time on loan in the Championship with Crystal Palace last season.

Hennessey said "I'm over the moon to be joining Charlton and working under Karen (Hills) and the staff. I feel it is a place where I can develop, gain further experience and grow as a player."

Busy transfer window for Coventry

Coventry United have been extremely busy during the January transfer window as they brought in ten players. Joining permanently are Morgan Cross, Rachel Newborough, Lucy Whipp, Isobel Goodwin and Mary McAteer, whilst Eleanor Ryan-Doyle, Ellen Jones, Khiara Keating, Connie Scofield and Mollie Green have joined the West Midlands side on loan.

Banaras makes history

Layla Banaras became the first South Asian heritage woman to represent the Club on Sunday afternoon.

The 16-year-old made her First Team debut as a 78th minute substitute in Blues Women's 4-0 victory against Huddersfield Town in the Vitality Women's FA Cup.

Banaras has been at the Club since the age of eight, stepping up to Darren Carter's side for the first time when she made the bench for the trip to Bristol City in November.

Sunderland make free transfer signing

Kosovo international forward Elizabeta Ejupi has joined Sunderland on a free transfer.

Ejupi has spent the last 18 months at Durham where she scored two goals in 16 games.

The 28-year-old said after joining "I'm excited. I think there's great coaches and a good team so I can't wait to be a part of it.

"I can't wait until I get into training, get to know the girls so I'm really excited." Sunderland have also signed Megan Borthwick from Durham, Brenna McPartlan from Louisiana State University, and Esther Morgan has joined on loan from Tottenham Hotspur.

Sheff United sign goalkeeper

Sheffield United have brought in goalkeeper Fran Stenson on loan from Arsenal. Stenson had spent the first half of the season on loan at Birmingham City where she made one appearance. Leaving the Blades are Lara Miller who has joined Burnley and Nina Wilson who has moved to Wolverhampton Wanderers on loan.

Lewes add depth to their squad

Scott Booth brought in five new players at Lewes during the January transfer window.

Joining are Valentine Pursey from Gillingham, Aqsa Mushtaq from Ergotelis and Kirsty Barton from Crystal Palace. Charlotte Wardlaw from Chelsea and Kenzie Weir from Everton have also joined on loan until the end of the season.

Two new signings at Saints

There were two new arrivals at Southampton during January. Goalkeeper Beth Howard joins from Bridgwater United whilst midfielder Chloe Peplow joins on loan from Reading.

Peplow had spent the first half of the season on loan at fellow Championship side Crystal Palace.



Stephen Flynn/SFP

Barclays Women's Championship Winter Transfers

Birmingham City



In: Claudia Walker (West Ham)

Out: N/A

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Ashley Hodson (in - Liverpool), Tara Bourne (in - Manchester Utd), Charlie Devlin (in - Leicester), Eleanor Ryan-Doyle, (out - Coventry Utd), Mollie Green (out - Coventry United), Delphi Cole (dual registration - West Brom), Olivia McLoughlin (in - Aston Villa)

Blackburn Rovers



In: N/A

Out: N/A

Renewed: Chloe Dixon (January 2023), Nicola Worthington (January 2023)

Loan: Chloe Williams (dual registration - Manchester Utd), Niamh Murphy (dual registration - Manchester Utd),

Annie Hutchings (dual registration - Manchester City)

Bristol City



In: Rachel Furness (Liverpool)

Out: N/A

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Lily Greenslade (dual registration - Plymouth Argyle), Erin Foley (dual registration - Larkhall Athletic), Gracie Pearse (in - Tottenham), Grace Clinton (in - Manchester United)

Charlton Athletic



In: Jess Gray (Billericay Town), Alex Hennessy (West Ham)

Out: Rachel Newborough (Coventry United)

Renewed: Lois Roche (January 2023)

Loan: Sian Rogers (in - Aston Villa), Elisha N'Dow (in - Aston Villa), Mary Bashford (dual registration - Gillingham)

Coventry United

In: Morgan Cross, Rachel Newborough (Charlton), Lucy

Whipp, Isobel Goodwin (Aston Villa), Mary McAteer (Aston Villa)



Out: Anna Wilcox (Boldmere St. Michaels), Evie Gane (Portsmouth FC), Cara Milne-Redhead (Newcastle United)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Eleanor Heeps (in - Tottenham), Olivia Rabjohn (dual registration - Aston Villa), Eleanor Ryan-Doyle (in - Coventry Utd), Ellen Jones (in - Leicester City), Khiara Keating (in - Manchester City), Connie Scofield (in - Leicester City), Mollie Green (in - Birmingham City), Arabella Suttie (out - Huddersfield Town)

Crystal Palace



In: N/A

Out: Charley Clifford (Ebbsfleet United), Kirsty Barton (Lewes)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Polly Doran (in - Melbourne Victory), Hope Smith (out - Millwall)

Durham



In: N/A

Out: Elizabeta Ejupi (Sunderland), Megan Borthwick (Sunderland)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: N/A

Lewes



In: Valentine Pursey (Gillingham), Aqsa Mushtaq (Ergotelis), Kirsty Barton (Crystal Palace)

Out: Charlyann Pizzarello (Newcastle United)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Emma Thompson (in - Chelsea), Frances Angel (dual registration - Brighton), Charlotte Wardlaw (in - Chelsea), Kenzie Weir (in - Everton)

London City Lionesses

In: Kyra Carusa (HB Koge)

Out: Rianna Jarrett

Renewed: N/A



Loan: Anna Pedersen (out - Billerica Town)

Sheffield United



In: N/A

Out: Lara Miller (Burnley)

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Sophie Barker (in - Leicester City), Maria Francis-Jones (dual registration - Manchester City), Fran Stenson (in - Arsenal), Nina Wilson (out - Wolves)

Southampton



In: Beth Howard (Bridgwater United)

Out: N/A

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Chloe Peplow (in - Reading)

Sunderland

In: Elizabeta Ejupi (Durham), Megan Borthwick (Durham),

Brenna McPartlan (Louisiana State University)

Out: Holly Manders

Renewed: N/A

Loan: Esther Morgan (in - Tottenham)



Durham Women and iPRO Renew Partnership for Three Years



HYDRATE

Durham Women are thrilled to announce a three-year partnership renewal with iPRO – who will continue as Official Hydration Drink and Wellness Partner of the club.

Ahead of the 2022/23 season, Durham Women announced that they were transitioning to a full-time training model. Having a solid relationship with Durham University means all training takes place at the university's world-class sports park. Previously, they operated using a hybrid training model, but now the club have taken the next step in their progression as they continue striving for success in this campaign.

As part of a winning performance, Durham Women players must master their competitive edge by bolstering their hydration levels. iPRO Sport Edition is an Informed Sport certified hydration drink trusted by sporting organisations worldwide. The healthy isotonic range is super-

charged with electrolytes such as potassium and sodium, replenishing the salts lost to sweat during vigorous matches and assisting in post-game muscle recovery.

iPRO is reinforcing its commitment to long-term sustainability by using 100% recyclable product packaging. iPRO has made it a priority to ensure each product has the chance to be recycled back into plastic bottles in a closed-loop recycling system, therefore less new plastic is created, and less used plastic is wasted. Under the partnership, the healthy hydration brand will support the club in various ways, including running a recycling initiative alongside Plastic Furniture Company, another partner of Durham Women, where eye-catching iPRO branded bins have been installed to promote regular sustainability habits for fans on the ground.

Charlotte Taylor, iPRO Partnerships and Operations Manager, said:

“We’re delighted to continue supporting Durham Women for another three years. It’s an exciting time to work with the club as they enter a full-time training model. iPRO is a huge advocate for supporting women in sport, and our premium hydration drinks will undoubtedly help the players stay ahead of the game. We wish them the best of luck for this season and beyond!”

Operations & Marketing Manager at Durham Women, Mark Donnelly, also commented: “We’re delighted to be continuing our relationship with iPRO and we look forward to seeing it develop over the next three years. iPRO have proven their commitment to supporting women in sport and their key brand value of sustainability aligns with our core beliefs as a football club. Our players have seen the benefits of using iPRO over recent seasons and we’re exceptionally grateful for their backing moving forward.”



 **BARCLAYS**
WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP

	Club	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1	London City Lionesses	12	8	3	1	28	8	20	27
2	Bristol City	11	7	3	1	17	6	11	24
3	Southampton	13	6	5	2	15	9	6	23
4	Birmingham City	12	7	1	4	20	13	7	22
5	Charlton	11	7	1	3	20	14	6	22
6	Lewes	11	4	4	3	10	12	-2	16
7	Durham	12	4	3	5	16	16	0	15
8	Crystal Palace	12	5	0	7	13	20	-7	15
9	Blackburn Rovers	12	3	5	4	11	16	-5	14
10	Sunderland	13	4	1	8	17	20	-3	13
11	Sheffield United	12	2	2	8	15	15	0	8
12	Coventry United	13	1	0	12	10	43	-33	3

Table correct as of February 5, 2022



THE FA NATIONAL LEAGUE

FA Women's National League to support PAPHYRUS



PAPHYRUS

PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE

The FA Women's National League have partnered with suicide prevention charity PAPHYRUS to raise funds and awareness across the 2022-23 season.

PAPHYRUS (The Parents' Association for the Prevention of Young Suicide) work to reduce the number of young people who take their own lives.

The FA WNL will support PAPHYRUS through several initiatives including donating some of the proceeds from ticket sales for the FA WNL Cup, Plate and Play-off finals.

"We are absolutely delighted to support PAPHYRUS for the remainder of the 22/23 season," FA Women's National League chair Carol West said.

"Our support will assist PAPHYRUS to continue the invaluable and tireless work they do in the prevention of suicide and promotion of mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people.

It can be hard to know where to reach out for support if you are struggling with thoughts of suicide. When opening up about suicide we recommend talking to someone you trust.

PAPHYRUS work to break down the stigma around suicide and help to equip people with the skills to recognise and respond to suicidal behaviour.

Ged Flynn, Chief Executive of PAPHYRUS, said: "We would like to say a big thank you to the FA Women's National League for helping us to continue giving hope to young people who are struggling with life.

"Our confidential HOPELINEUK service offers support and advice to young people and anyone who is worried about a young person who may be having thoughts of suicide.

"PAPHYRUS also engages with local communities and volunteers in suicide prevention projects and offers training to individuals and groups.

"We know that by working together with the FA Women's National League we will help to raise awareness and save young lives."

For practical, confidential suicide prevention help and advice please contact PAPHYRUS HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141, text 07860 039967 or email pat@papyrus-uk.org

Newcastle United sign duo



Newcastle United Women are delighted to announce the signings of midfielder Cara Milne-Redhead and defender Charlyann Pizzarello.

Both players bring with them a wealth of experience in the FA Women's Championship, with Milne-Redhead having previously plied her trade for Coventry United Women and Pizzarello arriving from Lewes Women.

Milne-Redhead has also spent time with Manchester City and Manchester United's youth systems, as well as representing Scotland at youth level, making the 20-year-old a key addition to the Lady Magpies' squad.

Upon signing, she said: "I'm really excited to join Newcastle United. It's an unbelievable club and I've been extremely impressed with both the professionalism and the ambition that everyone associated with the club has shown. Since my first meeting with Becky (Langley), I have been made to feel at home and I'm really excited to kick on and help the team get promoted.

"I aim to be able to bring my experience from the FA Championship to help get Newcastle to where they belong."

Pizzarello, on the other hand, has valuable international experience, representing

Gibraltar. The 25-year-old also plied her trade in Spain before arriving in England in September.

She expressed her delight after putting pen to paper for the Lady Magpies.

"I'm extremely grateful to be a part of Newcastle United," she said. "To get the opportunity to fight alongside the team in reaching the top of the table at the end of the season is amazing. I can't wait to get started."

Upon the duo's acquisition, manager Becky Langley said: "I am very happy about recruiting both Cara and Charlyann. They both bring experience from the Championship, and this will only help bolster the Newcastle Women's squad, as they have experience from two leagues higher.

"The girls have been training with us for the last three weeks and I'm really excited to see them hit the ground running in a Newcastle shirt."

The arrivals - both subject to final confirmation from the Football Association - are a statement of intent from United as the Lady Magpies look to capitalise on their positive start to the 2022/23 campaign.

National League news

Miller joins Burnley

Midfielder Lara Miller has signed for Burnley from Barclay's Women's Championship side Sheffield United.

Miller, 20, is an England youth international having represented the Young Lionesses at both U17 & U18 levels, and started out in the academy at Manchester United.

Switching red for blue with a move to Manchester City, she would win the FA Girls' Youth Cup before heading back to United for a further two seasons as her development continued.

And eventually making the move into senior football with Lewes down on the South Coast at the start of the 2021/22 season, Miller – who primarily plays in a deeper role – re-located back up north when she joined Sheffield United in January 2022.

Impressing in the second half of the campaign, the Blades got her signed on the dotted line ahead of the current season, and Miller now joins Jonathan Morgan's side here in East Lancashire.

The midfielder spoke to the Club's media having become a Claret, discussing just how happy she is to be on board, saying: "I'm excited to have joined Burnley and to be able to learn from the experience of both Jonathan and Jay [Bradford, Assistant Coach].

"I know it's a Club with big ambitions and heart, and that's what I wanted to come and be a part of.

"It's a great group and the girls have already made it feel like home. I'm looking forward to helping the team build on what has been a positive first half of the season."

Boss Morgan added, "Lara is an exciting young player that comes with lots of pedigree.

"She has settled in well and has trained hard with us. We've all been impressed with what she has shown and we're excited to get her some game time."

Suttie joins Huddersfield on loan

Coventry United defender, Arabella Suttie has joined National League – North side, Huddersfield Town on loan for the remainder of the season.

Suttie, who joined United in August 2022, from neighbours Birmingham City, has completed a period of rehabilitation, after an ACL injury, sustained in September 2021 and will link up with Town to gain valuable game-time.

Suttie came through the Chelsea academy system before joining Birmingham City at the start of last season following a successful trial. The youngster was injured in the opening game of the season at Tottenham Hotspur and she has faced a gruelling battle to return to a position where she can play regular football once again.

Logue becomes Gillingham manager

Gillingham have announced the appointment of Dan Logue as First Team Manager.

The statement read: “Dan brings a wealth of experience having most recently been the first team manager at Crawley Wasps. Dan, who is a UEFA A licenced coach spent time with Millwall Lionesses and is currently an England Lionesses Talent Reporter within the youth and senior set-up.

Speaking to the official club media, Logue said: “I’m really pleased to be joining the club at this time in its transition. Having worked with many of the players previously, I know there is strong talent within the group and I’m looking forward to working with them again.

“Having worked with Chairman, Kevin Hake previously in my time at Chatham Town, it was an opportunity I couldn’t turn down. I’ve seen first-hand his drive and ambition to take the club to the next level. After having quite a few conversations with Kevin, it was clear to me that he has the vision and the ability to help me take this club to the next level.”

Joining Logue will be Jesus Cordon as assistant manager.

He has a wealth of experience from Lewes and Crawley.

Ali departs Watford

Watford FC Women and Francesca Ali have agreed to a mutual contract termination, the club confirms.

Ali joined the Golden Girls in 2020 following spells at Leyton Orient, Millwall and Crystal Palace, going on to make 27 appearances over two-and-a-half seasons in yellow.

Part of the Hornets side that won promotion to the Championship in 2020/21, Ali’s creativity and work-rate in midfield played a key role in Watford’s success during the curtailed campaign and she remained a regular in the Championship.

Despite injury disrupting her 2022/23 season so far, Ali has scored twice from midfield including in December’s 5-3 FAWNL Cup win over Hashtag United, her final game for the club.

Head Coach Damon Lathrope and General Manager Laura Dyer extend their best wishes to Ali on behalf of the Golden Girls and thank her for her professionalism and efforts whilst at the club.

“Fran’s a fantastic person and a very good player,” said Lathrope. “She’s served the club very well and we wish her well for the future.”

“I would like to wish Fran all the best for the future,” said Dyer. “She has been a true credit to the club both on and off the pitch. She is a top person and player, with a great personality.”

Airtec & City Women form partnership

Cardiff City have partnered with Airtec Solutions for the remainder of the season.

Airtec Solutions are the U19 & U16 Front of Shirt Sponsors for the 2022/23 campaign, as well as partners with our senior Women’s side.

Speaking about the partnership, Iain Darbyshire, Head of Women's & Girls' Football at Cardiff City Football Club, said: “I am delighted to be entering into a new partnership with Airtec Solutions.

“Having known company director Paul Jones for a while, I am certain that we share the same passion for providing opportunities for female players across all ages.

“This sponsorship which extends across our three squads, is vital for continued development at Cardiff City FC and I look forward to working closely with Airtec Solutions in the coming months.”

Paul Jones, Company Director at Airtec Solutions, added: “We are very excited to have agreed a partnership with Cardiff City FC Women. Supporting the female game is particularly special for us as a company as it shares the same passion and commitment we deliver to our customers.

FANWNL

2022/23 Tables

Northern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Nottingham Forest	12	10	1	1	36	31
2 Wolverhampton Wanderers	11	8	1	2	19	25
3 Burnley	11	7	4	0	15	25
4 Derby County	13	7	2	4	13	23
5 Huddersfield Town	10	5	2	3	3	17
6 Brighouse Town	13	3	5	5	-3	14
7 AFC Fylde	12	3	5	4	-12	14
8 Stoke City	12	4	1	7	-12	13
9 Liverpool Feds	12	3	3	6	-11	12
10 Boldmere St. Michaels	11	3	1	7	-10	10
11 West Bromwich Albion	10	2	3	5	-9	9
12 Loughborough Lightning	13	0	2	11	-29	2

Southern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Portsmouth	13	9	1	3	16	28
2 Oxford United	12	8	3	1	18	27
3 Ipswich Town	12	7	2	3	12	23
4 Watford	10	6	2	2	18	20
5 Billericay Town	13	6	1	6	-2	19
6 Cheltenham Town	11	6	1	4	-3	19
7 Milton Keynes Dons	9	4	1	4	2	13
8 Bridgwater United	13	3	4	6	-4	13
9 London Bees	12	4	1	7	-10	13
10 Gillingham	11	3	2	6	-5	11
11 Plymouth Argyle	11	3	0	8	-15	9
12 Crawley Wasps	13	0	4	9	-27	4

Tables correct as of February 5, 2023



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL

2022/23 Tables

Division One North

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Durham Cestria	14	11	2	1	23	35
2 Newcastle United	12	9	1	2	19	28
3 Barnsley	11	7	1	3	9	22
4 Stockport County	13	6	3	4	7	21
5 Middlesbrough	14	6	0	8	-8	18
6 Hull City	11	5	2	4	7	17
7 York City	14	5	2	7	-2	17
8 Leeds United	9	5	1	3	8	16
9 Norton & Stockton Ancients	12	3	4	5	-3	13
10 Chorley	12	3	2	7	-14	11
11 Merseyrail	14	1	4	9	-27	7
12 Bradford City	12	2	0	10	-19	6

Division One Midlands

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Stourbridge	10	9	0	1	37	27
2 Solihull Moors	11	6	4	1	18	22
3 Doncaster Rovers Belles	10	7	1	2	17	22
4 Sporting Khalsa	12	7	1	4	11	22
5 Leafield Athletic	14	6	4	4	7	22
6 Lincoln City	15	6	1	8	4	19
7 Peterborough United	9	4	2	3	11	14
8 Northampton Town	10	4	2	4	6	14
9 Leek Town	13	3	4	6	-11	13
10 Wem Town	12	3	1	8	-11	10
11 Sheffield	9	3	0	6	-7	9
12 Long Eaton United	13	1	0	12	-82	3

Tables correct as of February 5, 2023



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL

2022/23 Tables

Division One South East

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Hashtag United	10	9	1	0	59	28
2 AFC Wimbledon	9	6	2	1	13	20
3 Norwich City	10	6	2	2	11	20
4 Actonians	11	6	1	4	30	19
5 Ashford Town (Middlesex)	11	6	1	4	21	19
6 London Seaward	9	6	1	2	4	19
7 Cambridge United	12	3	3	6	6	12
8 Queens Park Rangers	10	3	3	4	5	12
9 Chesham United	10	3	0	7	-28	9
10 Cambridge City	11	1	0	0	-21	3
11 Hounslow	9	0	0	9	-100	0
X Wymondham Town	X	X	X	X	X	X

Division One South West

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Exeter City	12	10	1	1	28	31
2 Cardiff City	12	10	0	2	41	30
3 AFC Bournemouth	14	8	2	4	22	26
4 Moneyfields	11	7	2	2	19	23
5 Southampton Women	10	6	0	4	2	18
6 Swindon Town	9	5	1	3	0	16
7 Selsey	10	5	0	5	6	15
8 Keynsham Town	10	4	0	6	-21	12
9 Porishead Town	10	3	0	7	-18	9
10 Maidenhead United	11	3	0	8	-19	9
11 Larkhill Athletic	12	2	0	10	-20	6
12 AFC St Austell	13	1	0	12	-40	3

Tables correct as of February 5, 2023



TheFA Women's
National League



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

The cities in England with the most demand for women's football



It's fair to say that 2022 was the year of women's football, as Sarina Wiegman's team of Lionesses brought football home in front of a record-breaking home crowd, the interest in women's football has never been greater.

Fast forward to December 2022 and former England player Jill Scott is crowned Queen of the Jungle, Beth Mead wins Sports Personality of the Year and four Lionesses were on the New Year's Honours List.

Football fever gripped the nation last year, but which cities in England are the most interested? Analysts at Footy Accumulators have discovered which cities have had the highest increase in demand for women's football.

Bradford has the highest demand for women's football

With searches increasing 143% year-on-year, Bradford is the city in England with the highest interest in women's football. Bradford is also home to Bradford City, a team in the FA Women's National League.

Newcastle and London complete the top three

Newcastle is the city with the second-highest demand for women's football as the yearly search has increased by 129%. As the birthplace of most players in the current squad, and hosting the Women's Euros 2022 final, Lon-

don makes the top three. Searches for women's football have increased by 128% in the capital.

The north has the highest interest

Of the top ten cities with the largest search increase, only four are located in the south of England. Northern cities make up the rest, indicating a higher demand for women's football up north.

Top 10

1. Bradford
2. Newcastle
3. London
4. York
5. Bristol
6. Liverpool
6. Manchester
8. Birmingham
9. Plymouth
10. Sunderland
10. Hull
10. Southampton

Pupils invited to ‘Get Creative’ in conjunction with Schools Football Week

The English Schools’ FA (ESFA) is pleased to promote a fantastic opportunity brought to schools as part of Schools’ Football Week 2023, thanks to The Women’s Football Magazine (TWFM).

In January 2023, The Women’s Football Magazine created a printed magazine special ‘The Year That Changed Women’s Football’, which completely sold out and was also made available to purchase from the National Football Museum in Manchester.

This is now set to be followed by another print special in April 2023, set to celebrate ‘The Next Generation’ of women’s football across the United Kingdom.

With a strong focus on girls’ football activity as part of the 2023 Schools’ Football Week

campaign and over 108,000 girls and almost a quarter of a million school pupils taking part in activity between the 6th – 12th February, TWFM and the ESFA are offering a fantastic competition for school pupils in England.

The Women’s Football Magazine are inviting school pupils to design the cover for their next printed edition of the magazine! Entries open on Monday 6th February and close on Tuesday 21st February. TWFM have created a template for pupils to use which can be downloaded—please see the next few pages for more information and simply print these pages to get started!

Entries need to be submitted by a teacher or parent/guardian and there is no limit to how many each school submits.

The winning cover will be made into the cover for the printed April edition of The Women’s Football Magazine and shared online via ESFA channels. The winner will also receive a TWFM season ticket subscription for their school and an individual digital subscription.

Furthermore, all finalists will also receive a copy of the magazine, have their artwork included within the issue, plus a personal digital subscription to TWFM.

The ESFA consistently aims to make schools’ football an inclusive environment for all pupils and to show that it is relevant across all school subjects. The Association is delighted to provide this opportunity for school pupils, this Schools’ Football Week.

Good luck to all those budding designers that take part.



DESIGN A MAGAZINE COVER COMPETITION

**THEME: THE NEXT
GENERATION**

Who: School age children

What: Create a cover illustration using the template attached focussing on the next generation of women's and girls football in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Your artwork can be a drawing, painting, collage or computer generated and will be judged on its creativity and how well it fits the brief.

When: Entries open on Monday, 6th February. All entries must be received by midnight on Tuesday, 21st February.

To learn more about The Women's Football Magazine visit our website: www.thewomensfootballmagazine.com

Winner:

The winning cover will feature on our April printed issue. The winner will also receive a TWFM season ticket subscription for their school and an individual digital subscription.

All finalists will receive a copy of the magazine, their artwork included in the issue and a personal digital subscription.

**To enter: Email artwork and your
completed entry sheet to:
thewomensfootballmagazine@gmail.com**



THANK YOU FOR ENTERING THE 'DESIGN A MAGAZINE COVER' COMPETITION.

School Name & Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Details: _____

I, _____, confirm by submitting these entries for the Competition, the entrant's parent/guardian has given permission and they can be used by The Women's Football Magazine, the English Schools Football Association and in association with all Schools Football Week activity and its coverage.

Please label each entry with a number and fill in the details for each artwork you are submitting.

Please note: Any artwork submitted without the correct information will not be eligible for selection.

	Name	Age
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10		

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THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

ISSUE P4 - APRIL 2023

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Royal Wootton Bassett Town add to management team

Royal Wootton Bassett have announced that Adam Wood has joined the Women's First Team's management team.

The experienced Wood brings a wealth of coaching and management in the women's game.

Most recently with Swindon Town where he managed the Robins' Under 16 squad before serving as joint-manager of their Development team, Wood has also spent time with Swindon Spitfires, Oxford City and Abingdon United.

He was manager of Oxford City's Development team from 2015-17, leading them to a Thames Valley Counties League Cup crown (2015-16) and Division One title (2016-17).

From there he moved to Abingdon United, where he enjoyed a four year spell that came to an end in June 2021.

His first season in charge was hugely successful as Abingdon won a league and cup double in the Thames Valley League, and also lifted the Berks and Bucks FA Junior Cup.

Abingdon then secured a second consecutive promotion in 2018-19 as Wood helped his team climb from the Southern Regional Women's Football League Division One South (level six) into the Premier Division (level five).

Wood now joins Bassett's coaching staff, where he will work alongside manager Simon Harrison and coaches Sadie Harrison, Martin Peters and Sam Wood.

Commenting on the appointment, Head of Women's Section Bryan Wood said: "We're really happy that Adam has agreed to join."

"He brings a great deal of knowledge and experience of the women's game, having succeeded at many clubs he's managed over the years."

"I feel this is a good addition to the coaching staff we already have in place."

Neve Renwick awarded USA scholarship

Neve Renwick, winner of our 2021/22 Grassroots Player of the Year award, has been awarded a full scholarship to Tennessee Tech.

To help raise money for the young, talented footballer, Renwick's club Wakefield AFC are offering a chance to win two shirts signed by the men's and women's team.

Raffle tickets are £5 and WAFC are matching all donations up to £250.

For more information go WAFC Twitter page @ Wakefield_AFC

Mum awarded for her work in football

Stacey Savage, a youth football volunteer and mum of three from Halewood has been awarded the Nationwide Mutual Respect Award for her efforts in supporting and nurturing the young local grassroots scene, as well as starting her own league.

Savage was a midwife in training before she had her three children, one of whom has disabilities. Now caring for them full-time, the 38-year-old decided to collaborate with other parents to form support groups for those in similar situations. She has also played a crucial part in launching the Merseyside Youth Football League (MYFL).

The Mutual Respect Award is a partnership between the FA Respect Programme and Nationwide Building Society, aiming to thank those who have gone above and beyond to build mutual respect within grassroots football. The winner of the monthly award receives a trophy and two tickets to an upcoming England football team game.

She said upon receiving the award: “I found out I was nominated from one of the referee’s dads just before Christmas. I was taken aback as there’s so many people involved; I questioned why I should get an award because I enjoy doing it.

“For me, it’s a collective, not just me, even though I have to be the one to make tough decisions sometimes. I’m really proud to accept this award.”

[Liverpool Echo]

Ridge City Women partners with Everton

Everton is proud to announce Ridge City has become the first women’s football club to join forces in an exciting new partnership.

The Ghanaian club, based in Accra and formed just four years ago, is the newest addition to Everton’s International Academy Affiliate Programme (EIAAP) as the Club looks to build on the huge progress made in the women’s game in recent years.

It is also the first African club to join the EIAAP programme, which aims to expand the knowledge and expertise of Everton’s player development processes to affiliated clubs across the world.

Everton plans to help expand the profile of Ridge City Football Club by facilitating and developing the women’s game in Ghana and offering a pathway for players.

The two clubs will also collaborate on player and coach development, coach education and helping Ridge City establish themselves as a foundation club for women in Ghana.

Cleopatra Nsiah Nketiah, CEO of Ridge City, said: “I am super excited about the partnership. We have been looking for an opportunity like this for a long time and the most important thing for us is that women in Ghana are serious about playing football.”



CUP COMPETITIONS

FA Cup fourth round round-up



Natalie Mincher/SPP

By Paul Donegan

The FA Cup fourth round took place on Sunday 29th January, and there were a couple of upsets, penalty shootout drama, record attendances, a few hat-tricks, and plenty of goals! The 20 winners from the third round were joined by the 12 Women's Super League (WSL) sides at this stage. The winners in this round got £15,000 in prize money whilst the losers got £3,750. Here is a round-up of what happened in the 16 ties.

Championship side Birmingham City caused an upset when they travelled to Everton and beat their WSL opponents 1-0. Jade Pennock scored the only goal in the 61st minute at Walton Hall Park. Everton hit the post twice and Lucy Thomas made a few good saves to deny them as the Blues made it through to the fifth round.

At least one side from the National League were guaranteed a place in the fifth round when third tier Burnley took on Cardiff City who play in the fourth tier and lead Division One South West. It was the side from south Wales who caused a shock and made it through as they won 4-1. Cori Williams, Laura Williams (2) and Ingrid Adland scored the goals for Cardiff before Evie Priestly got a late consolation goal for the home side.

There were eight other National League sides in the fourth round with four of them taking on top-flight teams. Fourth tier Leeds United visited 14 times winners Arsenal. The Gunners won 9-0 with the goals coming from Caitlin Foord, Kathrine Kuhl, Kim Little, Lina Hurtig, Jen Beattie, Stina Blackstenius (2), Michelle Agyemang and Victoria Pelova. Kuhl, Agyemang and Pelova all scored their first goals for the club.

Aston Villa were the biggest winners of the round as they won 11-0 against third tier side AFC

Third tier West Bromwich Albion took on Brighton & Hove Albion at home. The South coast side were comfortable 7-0 winners with Rebekah Stott, Julia Zigiotti (2), Danielle Carter, Katie Robinson, Brianna Visalli and Jorja Fox scoring the goals. Brighton had 19 shots on target whilst the hosts had none.

Another third tier West Midlands side Wolverhampton Wanderers were at home to West Ham United. It took the Hammers until the 71st minute to break the deadlock when Dagny Brynjarsdottir found the net. An own goal from Katie Johnson completed the scoring as West Ham won 2-0. The attendance was 1,692, a record for a Wolves match at the New Bucks Head.

Two fourth tier sides took on teams from the Championship. National League Division One South East leaders Hashtag United travelled to play Coventry United at Butts Park Arena. The home side won 4-0 with Ellen Jones, Mary McAteer, Alanah Mann and Freya Thomas scoring the goals. Hashtag had their goalkeeper Jamie-Lee Bamford sent off during the first half when the score was 2-0.

AFC Wimbledon had a London derby against Charlton Athletic as the second tier side visited them. Charlton won 5-1 with Freda Ayisi, Keira Skeels, Angela Addison, Beth Roe and Melissa Johnson finding the net for the Addicks whilst Ashlee Hincks scored the consolation goal for Wimbledon.

There were two tier two vs three ties. National League Southern Premier Division leaders Oxford United travelled to take on Bristol City at the Robins High Performance Centre. Shania Hayles, Jodie Hutton, Jesse Woolley and Emily Syme scored the goals for the home side as they won 4-0.

Last season's quarter-finalists Ipswich Town were drawn at home to Championship side Lewes. The second tier team came out on top as they won 1-0 with Emily Kraft scoring the only goal in the 76th minute.

Apart from Everton v Birmingham, there were three other WSL vs Championship ties. Current WSL leaders Manchester United travelled to Sunderland. Nikita Parris gave the visitors the lead in the 39th minute, Abby Holmes equalised for the Black Cats in the 67th minute before Parris scored her second of the match two minutes later. There were no more goals as Manchester United won 2-1 in front of 1,810 fans, a new club record attendance for Sunderland.

The other two ties between WSL and second tier sides saw convincing wins for the top-flight team. Last season's FA Cup runners up Manchester City won 7-0 at home against Sheffield United. Khadija Shaw scored a hat-trick and Chloe Kelly, Deyna Castellanos and Julie Blakstad (2) got the others.

Championship leaders London City Lionesses made the trip to Brisbane Road to take on Tottenham Hotspur, who hadn't been on the best run of form. Spurs won 5-0 though with the goals being scored by Bethany England, Mana Iwabuchi, Drew Spence, Harley Bennet (o.g) and Eveliina Summanen.

There were two all top-flight ties in the fourth round. Current holders Chelsea won 3-2 against Liverpool at Kingsmeadow. Sam Kerr scored a perfect hat-trick for the Blues to become their second highest all-time scorer, whilst Ceri Holland and Gemma Bonner got the goals for the visitors.

Reading got through after winning a penalty shootout 3-2 away at Leicester City. The scores were level at 2-2 after 120 minutes with Samantha Tierney and Hannah Cain scoring for the Foxes and Sanne Troelsgaard and Emma Mukandi finding the net for Reading. Grace Moloney was the hero for the Royals in the shootout, saving three of Leicester's spot kicks.

In the only all Championship tie of the round, Durham beat Crystal Palace 3-0. Mollie Lambert, Jessica Clarke and Lily Crosthwaite scored the goals for Durham as they reached the last sixteen.

Fourth round results

Arsenal 9-0 Leeds United	Coventry United 4-0 Hashtag United	West Bromwich Albion 0-7 Brighton & Hove Albion
Aston Villa 11-0 AFC Fylde	Everton 0-1 Birmingham City	Manchester City 7-0 Sheffield United
Bristol City 4-0 Oxford United	Ipswich Town 0-1 Lewes	Sunderland 1-2 Manchester United
Burnley 1-4 Cardiff City	Leicester City 2-2 Reading (Reading won 3-2 on penalties)	
Chelsea 3-2 Liverpool		

Durham 4-0 Crystal Palace	AFC Wimbledon 1-5 Charlton Athletic	Wolverhampton Wanderers 0-2 West Ham United
Tottenham Hotspur 5-0 London City Lionesses		

The draw for the fifth round has been made and these ties are due to be played weekend of 25th/26th February (check FA website/clubs social media for kick-off times and locations).

Fifth Round draw

West Ham United v Aston Villa	Lewes v Cardiff City	Brighton & Hove Albion v Coventry United
Manchester United v Durham	Tottenham Hotspur v Reading	Bristol City v Manchester City
Charlton Athletic v Birmingham City	Chelsea v Arsenal	

Over 30,000 tickets sold for Wembley final

The FA can confirm that following tickets going on general sale this month after an initial pre-sale, over 30,000 tickets have now been sold for the forthcoming Vitality Women's FA Cup Final.

With the showpiece event at Wembley Stadium Connected by EE just under four months away on Sunday 14 May, fans have shown how much anticipation there is for one of the most prestigious events in the domestic calendar, with encouraging ticket sales in recent weeks.

Last season's Final between Chelsea and Manchester City saw a record-breaking crowd in attendance when 49,094 fans witnessed the Blues overcome the Citizens 3-2 after extra-time in one of the most tightly fought and memorable Women's FA Cup Finals.

Tickets for this year's Final can be purchased [here](#). For accessible tickets please call 0800 093 0824.

Category Pricing

Category 1 - £30

Category 2 - £25

Category 3 - £15

Concession (OAP/Student) - £10

Junior (Under 16) - £5

Group Adult (9+) - £15



Match of the Month:

Tottenham Hotspur 1-3 Chelsea



By Paul Donegan

Chelsea reached the Continental Tyres League Cup semi-finals with a 3-1 win over Tottenham Hotspur at Brisbane Road. Sam Kerr scored twice (though the first might be an own goal from Molly Bartrip) and second half substitute Fran Kirby got the other. Former Chelsea player Drew Spence scored a late consolation goal for Spurs.

The pitch had passed an afternoon inspection and it was not as cold as previous evenings, though it was raining heavily as the sides warmed but that got lighter during the match.

The home side had won their Conti Cup group to reach this stage. Manu Iwabuchi made her debut for Spurs after joining on loan from Arsenal.

Beth England also made her first home appearance against her former side. Rehanne Skinner's Tottenham lined up with five across the back when defending with Celin Bizet and Kerys Harrop playing as wing backs. When attacking, their formation looked like it turned

into 3-4-3.

Chelsea were making their first appearance in the Conti Cup this season after not playing in the group stage due to being in the UEFA Women's Champions League. They made one change from their abandoned game against Liverpool at the weekend with Lauren James coming in for Niamh Charles. Emma Hayes used a 4-2-3-1 formation with the full backs getting forward, especially Eve Perisset, to support.

Tottenham had the first chance but a Eveliina Summanen free kick went straight at Zecira Musovic who easily caught it. Chelsea first opportunity came when a ball found Perisset who sent a low shot narrowly wide.

Bizet had the next effort for Spurs but again the shot was straight at Musovic. The Chelsea fans were making a lot of noise, and they saw their side have the next chance when a nice move finished with James seeing her low shot saved by Tinja-Riikka Korpela.

Korpela made another save when she caught Jelena Cankovic's 20-yard effort. James had the visitors next opportunity but her low shot was deflected just wrong side of post. From the corner, James had another effort at goal but her powerful shot from 18-yards sailed over the crossbar.

In the 38th minute, Chelsea took the lead when Cuthbert's low cross shot found the back of net when Kerr (or maybe Bartrip, or combination of both) got a touch on it.

The Blues had another chance before half time when Perisset's cross found head of Kerr but the ball went into the keepers hands.

The first chance for the second half went Tottenham's way when Spence shot wide in the 49th minute.

It was a fairly quiet start chance wise after the break with neither side having another attempt at goal until the midway point of it when the visitors made it 2-0. James

received the ball and went past Harrop then passed to Kirby who finished first time from 12-yards to score Chelsea's second in the 68th minute.

Rosella Ayane saw her shot go wide for the home side a minute after they went two behind. Another nice Chelsea move in the 73rd minute finished with a Kerr shot being blocked. A Chelsea cross was headed narrowly wide of their own post by a Tottenham defender. From corner, a James shot from the edge of area was easily claimed by Korpela.

Korpela made two saves in quick succession to stop Chelsea extending their lead when first she came out to block a shot, then seconds later saved another effort with her legs.

Chelsea made it 3-0 in the 86th minute when they took a quick free kick which found Kerr who

finished when she dinked the ball over Korpela.

Five minutes of stoppage time were signalled and both sides had chances during that. A ball from a free kick found England but her low effort was saved for the home side. Chelsea went down the other end but James couldn't get clean contact on a low cross across goal.

Tottenham got a goal back in the fourth minute of added time when Drew Spence found the top corner of the net with a rocket of a shot from just outside the area.

The win sees Chelsea through to the semi-finals of the Conti Cup for the sixth consecutive season.

Line ups

Tottenham Hotspur (5-4-1)

Korpela, Bizet, Turner, Bartrip, Zadorsky (c), Harrop, Ayane, Summanen (James 82'),

Spence, Iwabuchi (Ubogagu 59'), England

Substitutes

Spencer, Naz, Karczewska, Ale

Goal – Spence 90'+4

Booked – Ayane

Chelsea (4-2-3-1)

Musovic, Perisset (Charles 83'), Buchanan, Bright (c), Carter, Ingle (Fleming 61'), Cuthbert, James, Cankovic (Kirby 61'), Reiten (Kaneryd 76'), Kerr

Substitutes

Berger, Svitkova, Eriksson, Mjelde, Abdullina

Goals – Kerr 38', 86', Kirby 68'

Booked – Reiten, James

Referee – Sunny Singh Gill

Conti Cup semi final draw

The draw has been made for the semi-finals of the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup. London side Tottenham Hotspur.

Reigning champions Manchester City will face Arsenal whilst West Ham will host Chelsea in a London derby. A late goal from Dagny Brynjarsdottir was enough to see West Ham triumph over Liverpool at Prenton Park.

The semi-final draw took place live on TalkSport2., The Hammers faced Chelsea when they last reached the semi-finals in 2021, but on that occasion Emma Hayes' side scored six without reply to brutally dump the East Londoners out of the competition.

City moved a step closer to retaining their Conti Cup crown in their 6-0 demolition of Championship side Bristol City on Wednesday night.

Chelsea, who have lifted the Conti Cup trophy twice before, booked their place into the semi-

and are the most successful side in the competition's history, will host Aston Villa in their quarter-final clash on Thursday night, with former Gunners midfielder Jordan Nobbs set to get her first opportunity to come up against her old side.

An Arsenal victory would set up a repeat of the 2014, 2018 and 2019 Conti Cup finals against Manchester City in the next round. The semi-finals will take place on the evenings of February 8 and 9, while the final will take place on Sunday 5 March at Selhurst Park.

Arsenal, who have lifted the trophy on five previous occasions

Match of the Month: Arsenal 3-0 Aston Villa

By Paul Donegan

Frida Leonhardsen Maanum scored twice and set up the other as Arsenal beat Aston Villa 3-0 to progress in the Conti Cup and set up a meeting with holders Manchester City in the semi-finals. Caitlin Foord scored the third goal for the Gunners in what was comfortable win for them in front of 2,959 fans.

Jonas Eidevall gave Sabrina D'Angelo a debut in goal for the Gunners. Their other new January signings, Victoria Pelova and Kathrine Kuhl, were named as substitutes. Leah Williamson started in midfield. Carla Ward started Rachel Daly at right back for the visitors due to a shortage of defenders available. Sarah Mayling played in central defence and Laura Blindkilde Brown played in a more defensive midfield role.

Jordan Nobbs made her first return to play against Arsenal after leaving the club earlier in the month. Before the match, there was a presentation to her to recognise her long service to the club which was met with loud cheers and screams from the crowd.

The pitch had passed a midday inspection but it was still a cold evening at Meadow Park. The Arsenal fans in the North Bank were in good voice throughout the match. They saw their side have the first chance of the game in the 9th minute but Maanum curled her shot wide.

Kirsty Hanson had Villa's first effort but it went high over the crossbar. The home side were having more of the opportunities with Lina Hurtig seeing her shot caught by Hannah Hampton in the 14th minute, then three minutes later, Rafaelle Souza's low shot from 20-yards was also saved by Hampton.

Arsenal took the lead in the 29th minute. Maanum received the ball from throw in, turned her marker, then went on a run into the area and sent a low shot into corner of net from 15-yards.

A few minutes later, Kim Little saw an effort saved. Villa's most dangerous moments at the other end came when Arsenal tried to play the ball out from the back. Apart from that, D'Angelo was dealing with things fairly easily.

The home side had a couple more opportunities before the break. Hampton made a fantastic save to push over Little's shot in the 42nd minute. Lotte Wubben-Moy then put a header over as half time approached.

Five minutes into the second half, Arsenal made it 2-0. Foord won the ball after a Aston Villa throw in, passed to Maanum who sent a powerful shot into the top corner. This was the Norwegians 10th goal in 15 games.

Maanum provided the assist for the Gunners third goal in the 60th minute when her pass found Foord who run into the area and finished low into the corner of the net from about 8-yards.

The visitors were still not really testing Arsenal's new keeper with a long-range bouncing shot going straight at her in the 66th minute.

Arsenal brought on Pelova and Kuhl to make their debuts in the 67th minute.

Kenza Dali put a free kick not far wide for Villa in the 71st minute. This was probably their best chance of the match.

Maanum had a chance to complete her hat-trick but shot wide in the 76th minute when one on one with Hampton after some nice build up which included a Foord back heel. The offside flag was up anyway.

Pelova was played through in the 80th minute but was denied a goal on her first appearance by a diving save from Hampton. Alisha Lehmann's dipping effort finished on the roof of net for the visitors a minute later.

Pelova had another opportunity in

the 83rd minute but shot wide from edge of area. Nobbs was taken off by Villa a minute later to loud cheers and screams again from the home fans.

Arsenal had the final couple of chances of the match with Hurtig and Maanum both seeing efforts go wide. Frida Leonhardsen Maanum was unsurprisingly named Player of the Match. She had indeed been outstanding!

Line ups

Arsenal (4-3-3)

D'Angelo, Maritz, Wubben-Moy, Souza, McCabe (Catley 66'), Williamson (Kuhl 67'), Little (c), Maanum, Hurtig, Blackstenius (Pelova 67'), Foord

Substitutes

Zinsberger, Marckese, Beattie, Wienroither

Goals – Maanum 29', 50' Foord 60'

Booked – McCabe

Aston Villa (4-3-3)

Hampton, Daly, Mayling, Corsie (c), Pacheco, Blindkilde, Dali, Nobbs (McLoughlin 83'), Lehmann, Gielnik (Littlejohn 61'), Hanson

Substitutes

Leat, MacPhail, Mullett, Shaw

Referee- Carl Brook

Attendance - 2959



Champions League quarter-finals: Meet the teams



Arsenal (ENG)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 10
- Group stage: Group C winners (W4, D1, L1, F19, A5)
- Last season: Quarter-finals
- Previous European best: Winners (2006-07)

Barcelona (ESP)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 2
- Group stage: Group D winners (W5, D0, L1, F29, A6)
- Last season: Runners-up
- Previous European best: Winners (2020-21)

Bayern Munich (GER)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 5
- Group stage: Group D runners-up (W5, D0, L1, F14, A7)
- Last season: Quarter-finals

- Previous European best: Semi-finals (2018-19, 2020-21)

Chelsea (ENG)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 6
- Group stage: Group A winners (W5, D1, L0, F19, A1)
- Last season: Group stage
- Previous European best: Runners-up (2020-21)

Lyon (FRA) - holders

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 1
- Group stage: Group C runners-up (W3, D2, L1, F10, A6)
- Last season: Winners
- Previous European best: Winners x 8 (2010-11, 2011-12, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22)

Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)

- Uefa coefficient ranking

- (end of 2021-22): 4
- Group stage: Group A runners-up (W3, D1, L2, F11, A5)
- Last season: Semi-finals
- Previous European best: Runners-up (2014-15, 2016-17)

Roma (ITA)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): N/A
- Group stage: Group B runners-up (W4, D1, L1, F16, A8)
- Last season: N/A
- Previous European best: Debut season

Wolfsburg (GER)

- Uefa coefficient ranking (end of 2021-22): 3
- Group stage: Group B winners (W4, D2, L0, F19, A5)
- Last season: Semi-finals
- Previous European best: Winners (2012/13, 2013/14)



HOME NATIONS

Young Lionesses welcome Belgium to Tranmere



England will play host to Belgium for a WU23 international at Tranmere Rovers' Prenton Park on Monday 20 February.

The Young Lionesses will aim to impress in the Merseyside match during what is a busy month for the national teams.

The WU23 squad will be aiming for another strong performance after a series of promising displays in the latter part of 2022.

The year concluded in November with a 0-0 draw with Italy in Rome after a 2-0 defeat of the Netherlands in Walsall.

Tickets are now available to purchase via thefa.com/tickets priced at £5 for adults and £2.50 for concessions.

Schools will also get the chance to apply for up to 10 complimentary tickets, as well as England Accredited Clubs.

England last met Belgium at U23 level in October 2021 away in Tubize with

Katie Robinson scoring the only goal of the game and Ebony Salmon captaining the side.

Elsewhere the WU19s prepare for a trip to Alicante, Spain ahead of facing Germany and Switzerland on Thursday 16 and Tuesday 21 February respectively.

It's also a busy February for Sarina Wiegman's senior team who are taking part in three matches for the Arnold Clark Cup as they look towards the summer's FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. March will see the WU17s begin the next phase of their UEFA EURO qualifiers with three fixtures in Croatia against the hosts, Norway and Belgium.

The WU19s resume their EURO programme against Slovenia, Belarus and hosts Spain in April. The top team in each age group will progress to the summer finals.

Lionesses: The 1990s



By Clare McEwen

Women's football in the 1980s was beginning to grow. Although World Cups remained unofficial throughout the decade, UEFA had seen the potential and staged three successful Women's Euros competitions. Along with the Italians' "Mundialito", more competitive international football was being played than ever before.

The 1990s showed further growth in the game with FIFA finally taking an interest. A packed calendar of international fixtures would test the teams each year as the game grew across the world. There was still a long way to go, though – in England, we were still decades away from full professionalism.

Throughout the decade things did start to change. The 1990s saw the Spice Girls burst into our lives and more women started questioning the role

they played in society. This, alongside more coverage of the women's game, helped to raise its profile as the decade wore on.

But how did the Lionesses fair?

Euro 1991

The Euros settled into a two-yearly pattern through most of the '90s, kicking off in 1991. Eighteen teams entered qualifying and its name became equivalent to the men's: UEFA Women's Championship.

Qualifying took place through 1989 and 1990, and England found themselves in a group with the classy Norwegians, plus Finland and Belgium. The Lionesses drew twice with Finland and beat Belgium twice. They also managed a home draw with Norway, but were beaten 2-0 in the away leg. To compare with recent games, the home qualifier was played in front of 435 people at Old Trafford!

England finished second in the group behind Norway and

moved onto the quarter-final stage of qualifying. At this point in time, only the semi-final and final – so only four teams – were considered the "proper" tournament.

England drew Germany in the quarter-finals, and were easily dispatched 6-1 on aggregate over the two legs. Germany went on to win the trophy.

Inaugural World Cup

FIFA tentatively decided to join the party in 1991, and the first official Women's World Cup took place. They didn't seem fully committed to the idea yet though, branding it the "1st FIFA World Championship for Women's Football for the M&Ms Cup" to protect their "World Cup" brand. Mars the makers of M&Ms sponsored the event, but it was probably unnecessary to add that detail to the trophy name. Wordy and insulting, but a step forward.

China hosted after successfully putting on a test event in 1988

and the tournament took place over two weeks in November. Twelve teams competed, but England wasn't one of them. Unfortunately, the 1991 Euros qualifying competition doubled up as World Cup qualification. As you've seen above, Germany put a stop to that!

Euro 1993

Euro 1993 began with a group stage, moved to a second round, then a quarter-final before reaching the official "Euros '93" tournament proper. UEFA opted to organise the 23 teams into eight groups of three, with one group of two (a slightly odd choice).

England drew Iceland and Scotland in their group, won every game, scored nine, and conceded only one. They drew Italy in round two, however, and were soundly beaten 3-0; work was still needed to catch up with teams who had earlier support from their football associations.

Euro 1995

The long Euros qualifying stages continued. This time, 29 teams competed.

England, grouped with Spain, Belgium and Slovenia, finished the first round of qualifying top, with ten points. They beat Slovenia 10-0 in the opening game in September 1993 – Marieanne Spacey scored four, Karen Walker three, with goals from Clare Taylor, Gail Borman and Kerry Davis too. They won by the same margin six months later in the return match – this time seven different players scored. They also beat Belgium twice, and drew with Spain twice.

The second round was against Iceland, England won 4-2 on aggregate. For the first time in the '90s, they qualified for the tournament proper. Germany, Norway and Sweden also qualified – guess who England drew?

England lost 4-1 to Germany at Vicarage Road, Watford in front of 800 fans. They lost the away leg 2-1, in front of 7,000 fans. The crowds and the scoreline show how far behind England still were in terms of women's football. Germany became champions, their third title.

World Cup 1995

From famine to feast! Zero major tournaments not so long ago and now two in a year. Hosted in Sweden, 12 teams, including England, competed. The Lionesses were grouped with Norway, Canada and Nigeria. They finished second in the group behind Norway.

Have a guess who they drew in the next round? Yep, Germany again. This time Germany won 3-0. It was Norway who lifted the trophy though.

Euro 1997

By now, the tournament was growing – 33 teams entered qualifying and the new format meant eight teams reached the tournament proper.

England were grouped with Italy, Portugal and Croatia. Italy qualified automatically at the top of the group, but England, finishing second, had to go through another round before reaching the final eight.

They lost 3-2 on aggregate to Spain, missing out on the tournament hosted by Norway and Sweden.

This edition of the Euros was the last of the decade as going forward, the tournament became four-yearly.

World Cup 1999

The 1999 World Cup was a turning point for the women's game. Held in the United States (US), the structure changed, and it had a separate qualifying competition from the Euros for the first time.

Unfortunately, qualification was no friend of the Lionesses – they drew Germany, Norway and the Netherlands! They got a national attendance record at Wembley for the game against Germany when nearly 5,000 spectators came to watch, but sadly didn't reach what became the landmark 1999 competition in the US.

The tournament attracted 660,000 fans from all over the world and will forever be remembered for Brandi Chastain whipping off her shirt in celebration after scoring the winning penalty in the final against China.

It was iconic then, and over 20 years later it inspired Chloe Kelly's replica celebration – it's still iconic.

Girl power.



Player Profile: Nikita Parris



By Clare McEwen

Nikita Parris has played in the world's best teams and won the Euros, but it started in her front garden in Toxteth, Liverpool when her neighbour, the Kingsley United boys' coach, spotted her skills.

After a few successful years with the boys, she had to move to a girls' team. Her coach was keen to keep her on, but Kingsley United didn't have a girls' team. Undeterred, the determined Keets recruited her sister, two cousins, and friends to join the team – Kingsley United Girls was formed.

Nikita moved to Everton's Centre of Excellence in 2008, aged 14, and two years later made her senior debut, as a substitute against Arsenal. Her Champions League debut came in August against Borec – she scored two in a 10-0 victory.

The 2013 Women's Super League (WSL) season was when the goals really started flying in – six goals in 11 games helped Everton finish third. Unfortunately, Keets' 11 goals during 2014 didn't stop Everton being relegated. Nikita's performances stood out though – she was in the WSL Team of the Year and shortlisted for 2015 Professional Football Association (PFA) Women's Young Player of the Year.

Keets impressed so much during her loan spell at Manchester City in 2015, they signed her permanently from Everton in January 2016 and went on to win the WSL, League Cup, and the 2016-17 FA Women's Cup. Keets scored 11 times in the 2017-18 WSL season, adding four more in the Champions League, before City were knocked out by Lyon.

She averaged a goal a game in 2018-19, becoming the WSL's all-time top scorer with 37. After 127 appearances, 62 goals, 25 assists, two FA Cups, two Continental Cups, and a league title with City, Keets joined Lyon.

She scored on her Lyon debut, but after 15 appearances and eight goals, the 2019-20 season was halted by covid. Later, she added four goals in six matches in the Champions League. Keets missed the final, but Lyon won the title.

An Arsenal player for 2021-22, she again scored on her debut, and later that season scored her 50th WSL goal. She signed for Manchester United in 2022. In the last few weeks, she's earned player of the match (against Liverpool) and scored twice (against Sunderland) to see them into the FA Cup fifth round.

Keets represented and scored for England at every youth level. She made her senior debut in 2016, registering an assist against Serbia in a qualifier. In the reverse fixture, she scored twice off the bench. Her first major tournament goal came at Euro 2017, scoring the winner against Portugal.

Six goals during 2019 World Cup qualifying and her first World Cup goal at the tournament cemented her Lionesses place. She played all of Team GBs games at the delayed Tokyo Olympics. In 71 senior appearances so far for the Lionesses, she's scored 17 goals, won the SheBelieves Cup, Arnold Clark Cup and the European Championship.

From front garden football to a full trophy cabinet – dare to dream, kids!

Wiegman announces Arnold Clark Cup squad



England have named a 26-player squad to compete for the Arnold Clark Cup against Korea Republic, Italy and Belgium this month.

The Lionesses were the inaugural winners of the four-nation competition on home soil last year before going on to become UEFA Women's EURO champions in the summer.

With this year's fixtures to be played on double-header match days in Milton Keynes, Coventry and Bristol, Sarina Wiegman's squad will hope for three positive performances to set them up for the FIFA Women's World Cup challenge in Australia beginning in July.

The players will report to St. George's Park from Sunday evening and will remain at the Burton base to prepare for each of the three internationals.

In Wiegman's first selection of 2023, uncapped goalkeeper Emily Ramsey makes the step up from the WU23 squad, while Laura Coombs returns to a Lionesses squad for the first time since November 2020.

Captain Leah Williamson is back in the squad after injury forced her out of November's 4-0 defeat of Japan and 1-1 draw with Norway in Spain, while Jess Park, who scored on her debut in the first game, is also included again.

Beth Mead is among those to miss out after suffering an injury just before Christmas. Wiegman said: "The first camp of the year is always important to set the right tone for what comes next, especially with such a big opportunity in the summer.

"We are only looking forward now and we have to stay humble and focused on working hard. We know the fans will be with us again and we can't wait to see them at every stadium.

"We had a positive experience with the Arnold Clark Cup last time. We had three tough matches with different challenges in each one, and we were able to learn a lot from our performances and work on many details which we are aiming to do again."

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Mary Earps (Manchester United), Sandy MacIver (Manchester City), Emily Ramsey (Everton), Ellie Roebuck (Manchester City)

Defenders: Millie Bright (Chelsea), Lucy Bronze (Barcelona), Jess Carter (Chelsea), Niamh Charles (Chelsea), Rachel Daly (Aston Villa), Alex Greenwood (Manchester City), Maya Le Tissier (Manchester United), Leah Williamson (Arsenal), Lotte Wubben-Moy (Arsenal)

Midfielders: Laura Coombs (Manchester City), Frank Kirby (Chelsea), Georgia Stanway (Bayern Munich), Ella Toone (Manchester United), Kiera Wash (Barcelona) Katie Zelem (Manchester United)

Forwards: Lauren Hemp (Manchester City), Lauren James (Chelsea), Chloe Kelly (Manchester City), Jessica Park (Everton), Alessia Russo (Manchester United), Katie Robinson (Brighton & Hove Albion), Ebony Salmon (Houston Dash)

Scotland squad announced for Pinatar Cup

Pedro Martinez Losa has named his first squad of 2023 as the Scotland Women's National Team begin preparations for the forthcoming UEFA Nations League at the Pinatar Cup.

The 25-strong group will fly to the team's base camp at La Finca, where they will prepare to face Iceland, Philippines and Wales in the tournament.

Lisa Evans, Christy Grimshaw and Emma Mukandi return after missing the last squad, while Jamie-Lee Napier will be hoping to earn her first senior cap having been involved with the senior squad previously.

Scotland squad:

Chloe Arthur (Crystal Palace), Fiona Brown (FC Rosengård), Jenna Clark (Glasgow City), Kelly Clark (Celtic), Rachel Corsie (Aston Villa), Eartha Cumings (Liverpool), Erin Cuthbert (Chelsea),

Lauren Davidson (Glasgow City), Nicola Docherty (Rangers), Claire Emslie (Angel City FC), Lisa Evans (West Ham United), Jenna Fife (Rangers), Lee Gibson (Glasgow City), Christy Grimshaw (AC Milan), Kirsty Hanson (Aston Villa), Abigail Harrison (Bristol City), Brogan Hay (Rangers), Sophie Howard (Leicester City), Jamie-Lee Napier (London City Lionesses), Sam Kerr (Rangers), Emma Mukandi (Reading), Christie Murray (Birmingham), Kirsty Smith (West Ham United), Martha Thomas (Manchester United), Caroline Weir (Real Madrid)

Fixtures:

15 February 2023: Iceland v Scotland

18 February 2023: Scotland v Philippines

21 February 2023: Scotland v Wales



Beattie announces retirement from international football

Scotland defender Jen Beattie has announced her retirement from international football.

The talismanic defender has been a mainstay in the Scotland Women's National Team for more than a decade, helping guide Scotland to a first major tournament in 2017, followed by qualification for the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019.

Her international career has spanned 15 years and has seen her pick up 144 caps.

Jen made her senior national team debut in March 2008, aged 16, against the United States in Cy-

prus. She scored her first goal later that same year in a 4-1 win over Portugal in a European Championship qualifier.

Jen Beattie: "Representing Scotland has been an absolute honour and a dream come true.

"Thank you so much to every single staff member and player that has made my experiences so memorable and enjoyable. I've made friends for life.

"I've been a part of the national team for almost half of my life and it's been incredible to contribute to the growth of the game."

SWF and S1Jobs launch monthly award

A new monthly Youth Coach of the Month award is being launched by Scottish Women's Football and recruitment partners s1jobs.com to showcase and celebrate the best leaders and role models across the girls' game in Scotland.

Players, parents and fellow coaches are being invited to nominate coaches who foster a positive environment at their clubs, to ensure girls get the most out of their football, and who display the values of women's football in the spirit of fairness and solidarity.

The coaches with the most nominations every month will be named s1jobs Youth Coach of the Month and be featured on Scottish Women's Football channels, provided they have kept clean disciplinary records.

Commenting, Scottish Women's Football CEO Aileen Campbell said: "I am delighted that with our recruitment partner s1jobs we are able to showcase and celebrate the folk in girls' football who give up their time to offer opportunities for girls to play the game they love, get healthy and develop as part of a strong team.

"Since I have taken this position I have been blown away by the commitment and integrity of so many volunteers who give so much to foster an encouraging environment with respect for each other and opponents.

"We often focus so much on sporting success we forget all this other good work that goes on as well, which is why we want to give them a chance to shine."

Gavin Mochan, managing director at s1jobs said: "As SWF's recruitment partner, s1jobs recognises that most of the people providing wonderful opportunities for young footballers also hold down day jobs and have full-time careers of their own.

"The skills and values girls learn at football will hold them in good stead for the rest of their lives in whatever career they end up in, and it is absolutely right that the folks giving them these skills for the future are recognised.

"We're proud to be backing this initiative."

Martin signs professional contract

Sophie Martin has signed a professional contract with Glasgow City.

She is believed to be the youngest Scottish female ever to sign pro terms.

Martin has made three appearances for the first team this season and scored her first City goal in the Sky Sports Cup Quarter Final victory over Glasgow Women in October.

Signing until the summer of 2026, Martin is the second City player to have progressed from the Academy to the First Team as she follows in the footsteps of Lisa Forrest who signed her first professional contract earlier this month showcasing the pathway at Glasgow City.

Sophia Martin said on signing her first professional contract: "I am very delighted to be giving this opportunity to sign my first

professional contract at Glasgow City. It has always been a dream to play for this club. I can't wait for many more opportunities and to get started here with the staff and players. Here is to my future at Glasgow City."

Leanne Ross on Martin signing a professional contract:

"It is a proud moment to welcome another young player from our youth academy into our first team squad. Having just turned 16, Sophia has already impressed with not only her performance levels in U18 national academy matches, but also with her hard work & commitment to learning & developing within our academy.

"Sophia is a talented young player with huge potential and I believe that moving into the first team squad will challenge & support her to develop every aspect of her game."

Equal pay agreement reached

The Football Association of Wales is pleased to announce that it has reached an agreement with the Cymru Men's and Women's National Teams to achieve equal pay. The new agreement covers the period up to and including the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

The Cymru National Men's and Women's teams have released a joint statement in response to the announcement:

"Together Stronger has been the mantra across the Cymru National Teams for us all, both on and off the pitch as we look to put Wales on the world stage.

"As part of the FAW's strive towards equality, we are now proud to announce that together, our Men's and Women's teams have agreed to an equal pay structure for future international matches.

"We hope that this will allow future generations of boys and girls to see that there is equality across Welsh International football, which is important for society as a whole.

"With this agreement in place, we will now look ahead to the UEFA EURO 2024 and 2025 qualifying campaigns, as we aim to see further success across both our senior teams in the near future."

The agreement is significant as it also sends out an important message to the players of the future, in that anyone who represents Cymru in the senior squads are pulling on the same shirt and are representing the same team from an equal footing.

FAW CEO, Noel Mooney was very pleased with the agreement and commented: "The FAW is a modern, progressive movement that seeks to improve each day.

"This is another step towards becoming one of the world's great sports organisations and we thank both the Men's and Women's squads for their brilliant co-operation in getting this agreed."

The FAW will not be providing any further comment at this time.



Sports Press Photo

Youth teams announced for February international period

The Cymru WU17 and WU19 squads will travel to Portugal this month to take part in two-mini tournaments as part of their preparations for the Second Round of their UEFA EURO 2023 qualifying campaigns.

Nicola Anderson's WU19s will face Portugal (Wednesday 15 February), Poland (Saturday 18 February) and Iceland (Tuesday 21 February) in Sant'Ana. Following the tournament, Cymru will host the Second Round of the UEFA Women's U19 EURO qualifiers in April, where Anderson's side will face Kazakhstan and Estonia (dates and venues TBC).

Meanwhile, Nia Davies' WU17s will travel to Algés on the west coast to face the Czech Republic (Thursday 16 February), Portugal (Sunday 19 February) and Serbia (Wednesday 22 February). The matches will be their final preparations ahead of the UEFA Women's U17 EURO Round 2 qualifiers in March, where Cymru will face the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden in League A.

There is strong domestic representation across both selected squads, with eleven call-ups from the Adran Premier League and a further nine call-ups from the FAW Academy North and South teams.

Cymru WU19: Safia Middleton-Patel (Manchester United), Emily Roberts (Cardiff City), Elen Valentine (Aberystwyth Town), Bethan McGowan (Birmingham City), Ella Hilliard (Derby County), Phoebe Poole

(Cardiff City), Hollie Smith (Cardiff City), Zoe Smith (Cardiff City), Jessie Taylor (Manchester City), Megan Curran (Brighton & Hove Albion), Ella Humphrey (Portsmouth), Lauren Purchase (Nottingham Forest), Tianna Teisar (Bristol City), Faye Knox (Liverpool), Megan Bowen (Cardiff City), Olivia Owen (West Bromwich Albion), Lily Billingham (Cardiff City), Jessica Collyer (West Ham United), Mary McAteer (Coventry United), Taylor Reynolds (Boldmere), Scarlett Williams (Billiericay Town), Manon Pearce (Cardiff City), Elin Jones (Aberystwyth Town), Claudia Jones (Liverpool).

Cymru WU17: Cerys Phillip (Chelsea), Soffia Kelly (FAW South Academy), Ameliah Yarwood (Forest Green Rovers), Lauren Davies (FAW South Academy), Mayzee Davies (Manchester United), Casi Evans (FAW North Academy), Evie Hughes (Pontypridd United), Vera Jones (Barry Town Utd Academy), Amy Richardson (Everton), Elena Cole (FAW South Academy), Ruby Day (Bristol City), Keira O'Keefe (FAW South Academy), Amelie Curtis (Bristol City), Mared Griffiths (FAW North Academy), Charlotte Salisbury-Williams (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Chloe McMahon (Bristol City), Madison Perrott (Bristol City), Olivia Francis (Pontypridd United), Casi Gregson (FAW South Academy), Ania Denham (FAW North Academy), Sophie Rawling (FAW North Academy), Callie Jones (Bristol City).



FAW supports McAllister

The Football Association of Wales is pleased to support the nomination of Professor Laura McAllister CBE for a position on the UEFA Executive Committee.

McAllister, who is Deputy Chairperson of UEFA's Women's Football Committee and a member of the UEFA Working Group on Gender Equality, would become the first Welsh representative on the UEFA Executive Committee if elected.

A former Cymru captain, McAllister won 24 caps at international level and has also been involved in senior roles in sports leadership and governance following her playing career.

The election of the UEFA Executive Committee is scheduled to take place on 5 April 2023 at the 47th Ordinary Congress in Libson, where the 55 member associations of UEFA will cast their votes.

King Kenny bows out

By Zoë Tisdale

Kenny Shiels, 66, took over the role of Northern Ireland Women's Manager in 2019, replacing Alfie Wylie. When Shiels took the reins the landscape of women's football in NI looked very different to how it is now, and it is all thanks to him.

Crowds were poor, the squad was lacking strength and depth and they were very much seen to be the poorer cousins to the men's international team. In walked Shiels and a new era in women's football in NI was born. The NI women's team has undergone a transformation under Shiels's leadership and now the Irish Football Association has the unenviable task of finding his replacement.

Shiels guided the NI team to their first ever major tournament when they qualified for the 2022 Euros. They lost all their group games, including one against England, but this was still fantastic progress for a team mostly made up of amateur players, who all have full time jobs.

Under Shiels's reign they also sold out the National Football Stadium, the first time the women's team ever played in the newly developed stadium. Other games played at Seaview, home to Crusaders, were also sold out.

The players desire and passion to play for the green and white shirt under Shiels was clear to be seen and the green and white army stole the hearts of Southampton as they came in their droves to support their beloved players and manager.

After their last group game an emotional Shiels thanked the fans for all their support along the way and the players danced and sang with the crowd like they had just won the tournament. Such was the connection and accessibility between

the players and fans, it was one of the reasons that the love grew for Shiels as the women's profiles skyrocketed.

Shiels, who had one year left on his contract, was thought to have wanted to continue the journey in qualifying for the 2025 Euros, however, it wasn't to be. Whoever his successor may be will certainly have big shoes to fill.

Shiels had become a cult legend in the eyes of the supporters and enjoyed huge success with the squad, culminating in a surprising 1-0 win over the Italian giants in a friendly match played at Seaview last November. Italy is ranked 30 places above NI, who are ranked 47, the highest position they have ever achieved in the FIFA world rankings.

One name that has been rumoured to take charge is ex Glentoran and NI player Gail Redmond, MBE. Redmond has also just been awarded her UEFA Pro licence which is one of the stipulated requirements of the role. If a female is successful in taking charge, then they will become the first female NI senior women's manager to do so.

As the supporters come to terms with the loss of King Kenny, it is with absolutely no doubt that Shiels will go down as a legend in the women's game here in NI, and how he completely changed the face of women's football.

The rewards of his dedication to develop young new talent and to introduce a style of play to the game will continue to impact the game here for the better.

Thank you, Kenny.

History to be made in Belfast

History will be made on Friday, April 14 as the first-ever dedicated women in all sports awards in the whole of the UK and Ireland will take place in Belfast.

The inaugural Local Women Magazine Sports Awards will honour inspirational women from various sporting fields including football, hockey, camogie, LGFA, rugby, athletics, golf and equestrianism, to name but a few.

Sponsored by fuel provider Go, the awards are another ground breaker for Ireland's first and only female sports publication, Local Women Sports Magazine.

The gala awards at The Crowne Plaza Hotel in Belfast will simultaneously raise money for The Mary Peters Trust, which aids the development of young sportspeople, and celebrate the first birthday of the magazine.

The prestigious awards ceremony will be hosted by UTV sports personality and hockey ace Ruth Gorman who joins a star-studded judging panel.

Judges include former Northern Ireland women's captain Gail Redmond MBE, who works at the Irish Football Association (IFA) as women's development manager, Ulster Rugby women and girls rugby development manager, Eliza Downey, Dr Katie Liston, former elite athlete and senior sports lecturer at The University of Ulster, BBC sports presenter Nicola McCarthy, Local Women Magazine columnist Gemma Garrett, Zoe Watson from Belfast Live, camog Catriona Channing and sales manager for GO, Laura Loughran.

Nominations close on March 2.



Women's Challenge Cup

The match dates for this year's Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup have been set.

The competition will kick off this year with a preliminary round on Friday 12 May followed by round one on Friday 16 June. Seeded teams will enter the fray in the second round on Friday 28 July. The quarter-finals are scheduled to be staged on Friday 18 August.

The final is due to be held on Saturday 21 October at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park to decide who will take home the trophy.

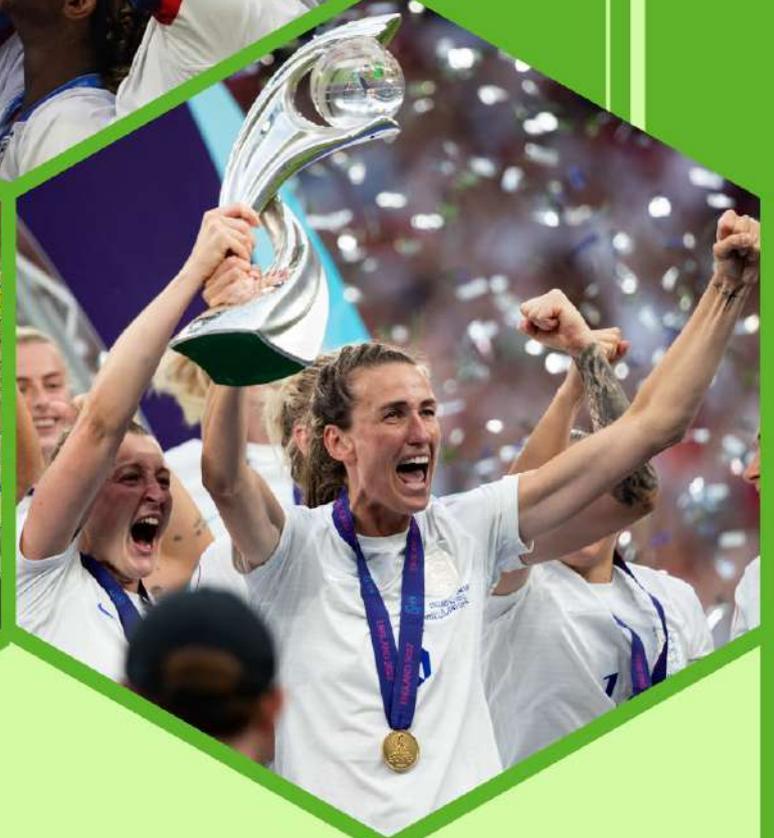
The 2022 winners, Glentoran Women, will be determined to defend their title as reigning

holders and the most successful team, winning the competition 10 times.

Sion Swifts will look to bring the fighting spirit displayed in the 2022 final while Premiership champions Cliftonville Ladies will no doubt be targeting the silverware.

With registration opening later this year, teams from the various NIWFA divisions will enter the competition, battling it out to win the 2023 Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup.

All fixture dates are subject to change.



INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

PREVIEW: Inter-Confederation Play-Offs

By Jamie Davies

February is a big month in women's football in 2023 with so many tournaments taking place but the biggest is the Inter-Confederation Play-offs.

There is just five months to go until the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off in Australia and New Zealand on July 20th.

But we do not have our full line-up yet as we only have the 29 out of the 32 countries entered so far with three spots still up for grabs.

Come February 18th the quest begins to find out who will pick up the final three spots as New Zealand hosts a 10 team tournament across five days in two cities.

Auckland and Hamilton will welcome Portugal, Chile, Chinese Taipei, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Paraguay, Haiti, Panama, Cameroon and Senegal. Only three from that list will be getting a ticket to Australia and New Zealand this summer.

None of the teams can look back now as FIFA's Inter-Confederation Play-Off format paints a very wild western picture as a winner takes it all scenario.

If you are unsure with this nerve whacking structure, let us explain how this play-off format works.

Tournament Explained

The Inter-Confederation Play-Offs begin on February 18th and concludes on February 23rd.

The structure has three groups with Group A and B having three teams each while Group C has four teams.

Here is where every country is placed.

Group A: Cameroon, Thailand and Portugal

Group B: Senegal, Haiti and Chile

Group C: Chinese Taipei, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea and Panama

Group A & B have the same format where two of the three teams play each other in a semi-final with the participating team awaits the winner in the final. The winner of the final qualifies for the Women's World Cup finals. It's as simple as that.

Group C is different because it has four teams but the only real difference is that they have two semi-finals with the two winners of the last four reaching the final before the winner of the final two joins the group winners of A & B for the World Cup.

Portugal and Chile have the automatic entry to the group finals of A and B as both teams are the highest seeded teams in the Inter-Confederation Play-Offs.

Schedule

Group A

February 18th

Semi-Final: Cameroon v Thailand – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

February 22nd

Final: Portugal v Winner of Match 1 (Cameroon or Thailand) – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

Group B

February 18th

Semi-Final: Senegal v Haiti – North Harbour Stadium, Auckland

February 22nd

Final: Chile v Winner of Match 2 (Senegal or Haiti) – North Harbour Stadium, Auckland

Group C

February 19th

Semi Final: Chinese Taipei v Paraguay – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

Semi Final: Papua New Guinea v Panama – North Harbour Stadium, Auckland

February 23rd

Final: Winner of Match 3 (Chinese Taipei or Paraguay) v Winner of Match 4 (Papua New Guinea or Panama) – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

We hope this all clarifies it a bit more to those who were not sure on how the format works. Deep down no one knows who will seal those final three places but it is now or never for the remaining competitors.

Preview: Arnold Clark Cup 2023



By Jamie Davies

The 2nd ever edition of the invitational event, Arnold Clark Cup, returns this month as the Lionesses hope to defend their crown.

It was just under 12 months ago when England manager Sarina Wiegman would experience her first tournament as the Lionesses manager and welcomed Germany, Spain and Canada.

An opening round draw with the Olympic champions of Canada in Middlesbrough was a good starting test to England before another share of the spoils ended goal less against Spain. But it ended in glory for the hosts after nearly 15,000 saw them capture the tournament win by beating Germany, 3-1.

It proved to be a great warm-up to last summer's UEFA Women's Euro 2022 and again we get the chance to see how four teams will possibly shape going into this year's FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

As well as England hosting the Arnold Clark Cup again, they will be joined by Italy, Belgium and South Korea. These countries will be making their tournament debuts.

FIXTURES

February 16th

Italy v Belgium – 16:45 at Stadium MK, Milton Keynes

England v South Korea – 19:45 at Stadium MK, Milton Keynes

February 19th

England v Italy – 15:15 at Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry

Belgium v South Korea – 18:15 at Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry

February 22nd

South Korea v Italy – 16:45 at Ashton Gate, Bristol

England v Belgium – 19:45 at Ashton Gate, Bristol

The format is very simple as all four teams participate in a group table and the team that

scores the most points after all three rounds will be crowned as the tournament winner.

THE TEAMS

As mentioned earlier in this preview, this year's entry list is completely different with only England being the only founding member of the Arnold Clark Cup from last year.

This year's line-up could be considered as weaker than what 2022 offered us in terms of the FIFA rankings but Wiegman and her Lionesses know they will be labeled as the favourites to lift the trophy again, so the pressure is on.

Ahead of the big kick-off on February 16th, here is a guide to all four competitive teams and what to expect.

England

Nickname: The Lionesses

Head coach: Sarina Wiegman

Captain: Leah Williamson

Honours: UEFA Women's Euro 2022 – Winners

Best FIFA Women's World Cup Finish: 3rd place (2015)

Best Arnold Clark Cup Finish: Winners (2022)

Player to watch out for: Lauren Hemp (Manchester City)

One of the players from the Euro 2022 winning squad has so much to give over the next few years in the women's game. It was just a few months ago that the Manchester City forward bagged a goal against the world champions of the USA to help England overcome them at a Wembley friendly.

The 22 year old had a lot of fun during the World Cup qualifiers by scoring seven goals and creating eight assists in just 10 matches.

Possible Starting Line-Up: Earps (GK); Daly, Bright, Greenwood, Charles; Walsh, Stanway, Toone, Kelly, Russo, Park.

South Korea

Nickname: Tigers of Asia

Head Coach: Colin Bell

Captain: Kim Hye-ri

Honours: AFC Women's Asian Cup Runners-up (2022)

Best FIFA Women's World Cup Finish: Round of 16 (2015)

Best Arnold Clark Cup Finish: Never Entered

Player to watch out for: Ji So-yun

A player we haven't seen on this land since she departed Chelsea in the summer of 2022 after eight successful years with the top flight club.

Since her departure, Ji So-yun returned to her home country

to play for Suwon FC who last played for them back in November where they lost to Gyeongju in the WK League Play Offs.

Her appearance at this Arnold Clark Cup will certainly be welcomed and will no doubt give us some nostalgia seeing the South Korean control the midfield.

Possible Starting Line-Up: J. Kim (GK); H. Choo, H. Kim, S. Lim, S. Jang, G. Lee, So-yun, M. Lee, C. Kang, H. Son, Y. Choe.

Belgium

Nickname: Belgian Red Flames

Head Coach: Ives Serneels

Captain: Tessa Wullaert

Honours: Pinatar Cup 2022 (Winners)

Best FIFA Women's World Cup Finish: Quarter-finals

Best Arnold Clark Cup Finish: Never Entered

Player to watch out for: Tessa Wullaert

She is Belgium's record top goal scorer with 71 goals scored since her first cap was received back in 2011.

The 29-year-old maybe remembered for her two year spell at Manchester City between 2018 and 2020 by making 31 appearances along with lifting the League Cup (2019) and the FA Cup (2019).

These days Wullaert is now playing in the Netherlands for Dutch club Fortuna Sittard and has done since last year with eight appearances and already six goals to her name.

Could be one of the players to watch out for when it comes to the race for the Golden Boot.

Possible Starting Line-Up: Evrard (GK); Meersman, Kees, Biesmans, Cayman, Dhont, De Caigny, Vanhaevermaet, Delacauw, Janssens, Wullaer.

Italy

Nickname: The Blues

Head Coach: Milena Bertolini

Captain: Sara Gama

Honours: UEFA Women's Championship (2x Runners-up)

Best FIFA Women's World Cup Finish: Quarter-finals

Best Arnold Clark Cup Finish: Never entered

Player to watch out for: Cristiana Girelli (Juventus)

Currently the top scorer in the current Italy squad, Cristiana Girelli has been around the women's football scene for the best part of over a decade now and she is simply scoring goals for fun for club and country.

She is just four goals away from reaching the half a century mark for Italy. Meanwhile, Girelli has been quite the player at Juventus since she joined the old lady in 2018. The 32-year-old was top scorer of the 2019/20 season with 16 goals and the top scorer of the 2020/21 season.

Italy could be the dark horses of the tournament especially if Girelli is fit and ready to be named in the squad.

Possible Starting Line-Up: Giuliani (GK); Bartoli, Filangeri, Boattin, Cafferata, Simonetti, Giugliano, Cernoia, Glionna, Girelli, Bonansea.

PREVIEW: SheBelieves Cup 2023

2023

SHEBELIEVES CUP

One of the biggest tournaments on the women's football calendar is back this month as the USA gets ready for the 8th edition of the SheBelieves Cup.

Just like the Arnold Clark Cup, the USWNT's version has been a yearly fixture for nearly a decade now and is still standing strong. With it being a World Cup year, this is one of the most important chapters of the international friendly yet.

This is only the second time the SheBelieves Cup has taken place in a World Cup year and it has so far been very good preparation for the USWNT since they won the last World Cup in 2019.

There is a lot of pressure on the USA to deliver the goods again since they are currently on a roll of winning two World Cups in a row and have reached the last three finals of the World Cup, consecutively (2011, 2015 & 2019).

The 2022 edition of the SheBelieves Cup was considered as a bit of a lower ranked tournament for the USA as their opponents were Iceland, Czech Republic and New Zealand. Those teams are not exactly world beaters in women's football currently but

their trips to the West was surely very valuable experience picked up by taking on arguably the greatest nation in women's football history.

But this year, US Soccer have invited some of the top guns in what will be a great test for the world champions to try and remind the football community that they can still be the best in the business.

The Olympic champions Canada will enter the tournament alongside the Copa America Feminina winners of Brazil and the 2011 World Cup winners of Japan.

At least Canada and Brazil are some of the main contenders attempting to bring home their first ever Women's World Cup this summer and the participation at this year's SheBelieves Cup is a great chance to see if they have what it takes.

FIXTURES

February 16th

Japan v Brazil – Exploria Stadium, Orlando, Florida – 16:00 (local time)

United States v Canada - Exploria Stadium, Orlando, Florida – 19:00 (local time)

February 19th

United States v Japan – Geodis Park, Nashville, Tennessee – 14:30 (local time)

Brazil v Canada - Geodis Park, Nashville, Tennessee – 17:30 (local time)

February 22nd

Canada v Japan – Toyota Stadium, Frisco, Texas – 15:00 (local time)

United States v Brazil – Toyota Stadium, Frisco, Texas – 18:00 (local time)

Just like the Arnold Clark Cup, the format is simply a group table as the team that scores the most points after three matches is declared the winner of the SheBelieves Cup.

SQUADS

So far only Brazil and USA have announced their squads for the tournament as we write this with Japan and Canada's teams still to be named by their coaches of Futoshi Ikeda and Bev Priestmann.

The squad limit at the SheBelieves Cup is 23 players.

Brazil

Coach: Pia Sundhage (Sweden)

Goalkeepers: Leticia Izidoro (Corinthians), Lorena (Gremio), Luciana (Ferroviaria).

Defenders: Bruninha (NJ/NY Gotham), Tainara (Bayern Munich), Rafaelle (Arsenal), Kathellen (Real Madrid), Lauren (Madrid CFF), Tarciane (Corinthians), Yasmin (Corinthians), Tamires (Corinthians).

Midfielders: Adriana (Orlando Pride), Ary (Racing Louisville), Ana Vitoria (Benfica), Julia Bianchi (Chicago Red Stars), Kerolin (North Carolina Courage).

Forwards: Bia Zaneratto (Palmeiras), Geysa (Barcelona), Gabi Nunes (Madrid CFF), Debinha (Kansas City Chiefs), Nycole Raysla (Benfica), Ludmila (Atletico Madrid), Marta (Orlando Pride).

USA

Coach: Vlatko Andonovski (North Macedonia)

Goalkeepers: Adrianna Franch (Kansas City Chiefs), Casey Murphy (North Carolina Courage), Alyssa (Chicago Red Stars).

Defenders: Alana Cook (OL Reign), Emily Fox (North Carolina Courage), Crystal Dunn (Portland Thorns), Naomi Girma (San Diego Wave), Sofia Huerta (OL Reign), Becky Sauerbrunn (Portland Thorns), Emily Sonnett (OL Reign).

Midfielders: Lindsey Horan (Lyon), Taylor Kornieck (San Diego Wave), Rose Lavelle (OL Reign), Kristie Mewis (NJ/NY Gotham), Ashley (Washington Spirit), Andi Sullivan (Washington Spirit).

Forwards: Ashley Hatch (Washington Spirit), Alex Morgan (San Diego Wave), Margaret Purce (NJ/NY Gotham), Megan Rapinoe (OL Reign), Trinity Rodman (Washington Spirit), Mallory Swanson (Chicago Red Stars).

PLAYERS TO WATCH OUT FOR

All four nations will be at this summer's Women's World Cup so the squads travelling to Frisco, Nashville and Orlando could be a sneak preview of who to watch down under.

We have gone through the squads (and potential line-ups) of which player to look out for at this month's SheBelieves Cup from all four teams.

Brazil – Kerolin (North Carolina Courage)

At just 23 years old since November, Kerolin has travelled a bit in her football career. After starting out at Brazilian club Valinhos in Sao Paulo in 2016, her time on the road has seen her represent Palmeiras and Ponte Preta before her big move to Europe to play for Madrid CFF. Then the striker made another big move to the United States to sign a contract at North Carolina Courage in 2022 and has so far found the net 6 times in 12 matches.

Kerolin was among several promising young footballers to emerge from the youth system of Valinhos. She is starting to show that.

USA – Naomi Girma (San Diego Wave)

The US team's success of winning the World Cup in 2015 and 2019 is starting to show an age in some of those heroes including the likes of Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan.

But this year's World Cup will be a chance for a younger generation to make their mark including 22-year-old Naomi Girma.

Girma is a defender for San Diego Wave and so far has just 12 caps for USWNT. Her name became known when she was the 1st pick of last year's NWSL Draft. She has also won multiple CONCACAF tournaments which include last year's Women's Championship after winning the youth edition in the U20 and U17 editions in 2020 and 2016.

Canada – Adriana Leon (Manchester United)

A player many WSL fans have been watching regularly in England for West Ham United and now Manchester United since she made the move up north last summer.

The Canadian winger has been an important player for manager Marc Skinner at Man United as her presence has created depth in a bid for the club to win their first ever WSL title along with qualifying for the Women's Champions League.

Japan – Saki Kumagai (Bayern Munich)

One of the remaining players left from the Japanese side that won their first ever World Cup 12 years ago by shocking the USA in a penalty shootout.

Saki Kumagai scored the winning penalty against USA's Hope Solo and now after all these years she has become one of the most experienced players in the squad. This year could be her last appearance at a World Cup.



AROUND THE WORLD

Interview: Amber Barrett



Sports Press Photo

By Peter Mann

In scoring the most important goal in the history of women's football in the Republic of Ireland, striker Amber Barrett's career continued on its upward trajectory.

The win, over Scotland, at Hampden Park, on 11 October 2022, wrote the Germany-based 27-year-old into Irish history, and sent them to the Women's World Cup finals, this coming summer.

But it's perhaps the fact that Barrett started out late in her footballing career, has made her rise, her journey, even more remarkable.

Having begun back home, at Peamount United, in Newcastle, South Dublin, they being co-founders and inaugural champions of the Women's National League, back in 2011-12, between 2015 and 2019, she tasted success even then.

Moving to mainland Europe though, that move, the decision, was formed by that of the ex-Republic boss, Colin Bell (2017-19), who had spent more than three decades himself in Germany, both as a player, and as a manager/coach.

"I really like it here, in Germany, and feel as though I've settle quite well," admitted Barrett, who spent several seasons with FC Koln before moving the Turbine Postdam this past summer.

"The plan always was, after finishing university, to play professional football, and Colin (won the Women's Champions League with Eintracht Frankfurt), he spent a lot of time here himself, speaking very highly of the country, the culture, and the game itself.

"At Koln, that was a fantastic experience for me, and I fell in love with it all, including the city, and what it all stands for.

"Relegation though, that was hard to take for us as we went down on goal-difference (2020), but we knew that, after the Leverkusen game (5 -1 away), that was to be our fate.

"We bounced straight back up the following season however, as champions (2021), and, even though I left last summer, they continue to push on, which is great to see.

"When we won promotion, that was an enjoyable experience for me, and I had three, very good seasons there."

When opportunity knocks however, sometimes, you just have to take the proverbial bull by the horns, and whatever happens next, happens. For Barrett, that's exactly what she did when, just this past summer, she would swap the Franz-Kremer-Stadion, for the Karl-Liebkecht-Stadion, way out east, and to Turbine Postdam.

The two-time Champions League, and six-time Frauen-Bundesliga winners, Postdam's history is certainly a glorious one, something which Barrett found difficult to ignore, perhaps even swaying her decision just that little more.

Last season, and with Koln finishing a respectable eighth, Postdam were more than twenty points better off, in fourth, than her now, former club, whilst also being a handful of points off that final, Champions League place.

This season though, things couldn't have gone any differently, for player, and club, Barrett adding that: "Postdam, with all the history here, was difficult for me to turn down.

"This season though, well the first half of it, has been difficult, and injuries overall have certainly played their part, meaning we missed a lot of quality, something which is hard to replace.

"Now though, coming back from the winter break, and with a new manager (the club

parted company with Sebastian Middeke a few months ago and was replaced a few weeks later, by Sven Weigang), we're hoping to push on more as we've been unfortunate to play more than a few games on the road (Wolfsburg and Bremen the closest, Munich, Freiburg, and Hoffenheim the furthest).

"With us being in the middle of nowhere, hopefully it'll now play to our advantage, instead of us travelling seven, eight hours to a game.

"But we also need other teams, around us, to not be picking up points, whilst still believing we can do it."

That in itself would mean that Barrett, and her Postdam teammates, need to look at hitting the ground running, with the second game back being against second-bottom, Werder Bremen – they've a free hot first, with high-flying powerhouses, Bayern Munich.

With that game (Bremen) firmly in their sights, they'll hope the next three clubs

above them, all on ten points, Duisburg (play Hoffenheim and Leverkusen), Essen (face Koln and leaders Wolfsburg), and Koln themselves (have both Essen, and Hoffenheim), don't start pulling away.

Then, once the current campaign finishes, Barrett's attention immediately switches to this summer's World Cup, in Australia and New Zealand, she having netted that, all-important, winning goal, against Scotland, to send the Irish down under.

"Everybody has an eye on the World Cup, but we need to be in the best position for the league first," admits Barrett.

"That Scotland game though, was unbelievable, and so something which was great to experience.

"It was a game of few chances, but I honestly feel that we got what we deserved from it; now, it's onto the finals themselves, after the league season is finished that is."



New Balance signs rising star Cooper



New Balance Football has announced 2022 MAC Hermann Trophy winner and 2022 ACC Offensive Player of the Year Michelle Cooper officially joins the brand's roster. As one of the top prospects in the upcoming U.S. Women's National League draft Michelle joins New Balance ahead of an exciting year for women's soccer and represents the brand's commitment to championing the next generation of talent.

Leaving college following her sophomore season, Michelle has been in phenomenal form during her short college career, posting the school record for most goals (31) and points (78) through a Sophomore season while leading them to back to back NCAA Tournaments. She finishes her time at Duke as a

history maker, becoming the first female to leave early for professional football and the first striker to score five goals in their first five games.

On the international stage, she is already beginning to make waves after winning the Golden Boot and Golden Ball at the 2022 CONCACAF Women's U-20 Championship as well as captain and leading scorer of the U-20 U.S. National Team at the 2022 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Michelle said: "I chose New Balance because they stand for more than just on the field performance. Their values, goals and what they stand for align with exactly who I am and want to be on and off the field."

In 2023 the world will be focused on women's football

and Michelle becomes the latest female player to join New Balance Football as the brand expands its support and dedication to nurturing uprising talent. She joins NWSL Champion and Costa Rican star Rocky Rodriguez, Spain Midfielders Claudia Zornoza and Sheila Garcia and Portuguese midfielder Tatiana Pinto.

Andrew McGarty, New Balance Head of Global Football Sports Marketing said: "We are honoured to have Michelle join the New Balance family. We are excited for the world to see what an amazing, young talent Michelle is on and off the pitch and be a part of her story as she leaves her mark on the sport for years to come."

Interview: Celine Abbas



By Simon O'Neill

Juventus player Celine Abbas started playing football as young girl. Throughout her career she has faced many challenges and trials but wouldn't change her career for the world. Simon O'Neill sat down to chat to her about her time so far in the game.

At what age were you first interested in football?

My interest in football has had 2 peaks in my life. The first one at the age of 8, when we had just moved in a new neighbourhood.

I remember having a football at home. I remember seeing young boys playing outside bare feet all afternoon on the hot asphalt. I would be dropped by the school bus. Run in take my ball and run back outside to play all afternoon, until my parents came back home later in the evening. What's interesting is the second peak of my life.

To my surprise, at the age of 23, as I was approaching the finish line of my double master's studies, and the end of a very long educational journey, a switch just flipped in my head. (The incredible mysterious ways of the brain) That is the exact moment I decided to pursue football and start training and looking for

opportunities in a serious professional manner.

Who were your football idols as when young?

My football idol was Zinedine Zidane "Zizou". I also remember people seeing me running around the neighbourhood in Algeria with a football.

They would be calling me baby Ronaldinho, and so to this day I still sometimes get the feeling of running in the streets with my sweaty hair falling over my face, the sun heating up my body, and the ball and i just running together.

How did you become to play in your preferred position?

Fast forward to three years ago. When I entered my first team as a senior player, i was in the attacking line. Playing from striker to lateral.

My coach, Daniel Bottos one day came up to me during a game and whispered: " I am going to put you in defence. You would make a great defender."

I looked at him and answered: "Coach don't ever say that!" He smiled and walked away.

At the next training session, he stuck to his word, and I played as

a Lateral Defender. Luckily for my team this day, I was full of rage and not a single play was successful for the other team. I could hear my coach and his assistant in the background saying to leave me playing aggressively. He said it would show the rest of the team what really caring about a game is.

Since hearing that comment that day, I understood what made me the best at the position I currently play in: aggressiveness, tunnel vision and the desire to win.

As you progressed through your age groups in football, when did you realise that you had the talent to play in a high level?

I never had the opportunity to join an academy and progress through age groups. I would have been able to compare myself to other girls, and not have the doubts I had in the beginnings of my journey. The moment I realised I had the talent to play and compete in high levels, is when I would be playing football in public, in pickup games or even against a wall, and would repeatedly see people's faces and reactions when I would answer to the question: "you play professionally, right? In which club do you play?" and my answer would be: "I play here".

People were shocked and disappointed, they would give me advice and talk to me about people they knew who professionals were and so on.

It took me a while to realise that I had the talent to compete in high levels. 2 years at least.

Are you a fulltime professional football player?

As I like to explain, if I were a boy, I would be a Full-time player. Unfortunately, I am not. This means salaries in my division are close to symbolic. This means I must work to be able to continue playing football and find a full-time opportunity. I am a part time professional football player and part time worker to my great regret.

Does your family approve you of playing football?

My family, whose focus has always been to provide us the best education on the market were a bit reluctant hearing the news around the time I was graduating. Though, they have faith in my ideas and capabilities. They now approve the idea of me playing football, because I demonstrated extreme will and belief, coupled with hard work and sacrifice of lively pleasures. They have also been able to observe my physical and mental betterment which I think, speaks louder than any words. My parents and family have never seen me play football with others.

With training sessions being such a busy schedule, how do you balance that with everyday life?

It has been very difficult balancing training sessions schedules with my new job after graduation, and life overall. Without sacrifice, belief that it will be all worth it and pride in doing so, balancing becomes very difficult. I can clearly state that since taking football seriously, I have valued the importance of time in a way I never would have otherwise.

Wasted time is wasted results to an extent. Resting, watching games, getting in touch with the ball, are all infinite actions, that could replace "wasted time". As an Athlete with high ethical views on performance, it is important to reserve a time for the rest of your life, because the absence of it could lead to later regrets in life. Find time to be human. We are not just an Athlete. (I know it's hard). My advice for anyone out there on a mission, reserve time for extra activities even if they don't directly improve your performance.

What are the training sessions like at your club (without giving away any secrets)?

Everyone arrives early enough to discuss and bond before each practice. Some girls come straight from work like me. Others from their studies in schools, universities.

We put our gear on, some start "activating", some finish gearing up. We then all head out as a group to the ground. The younger group sees us go in.

Depending on the day, the focus would be on either strength, endurance, scenario plays, technical drills. We usually finish off and anybody with pain or discomfort heads to get advice for resting from our physical preparator. Get dressed, and head back home. For some, by car, other parents, and others like me by bike or public transport.

It is for reasoning I am stating the different options people have. It creates inequality in opportunities. For example, heading back home to your parents, by car, and having a cooked meal ready for you, is very different from heading back home to your room on a cold night, and having to cook for yourself and be alone. External factors like this play a big role in a player's development, and athletes should be aware of them to optimize their performances.

Are there any ambitions to play in the English WSL or playing internationally?

The ambitions to play in the English WSL and internationally are definitely present. England has proved over and over in the past years its role and position in Women's Football. Other countries here in Europe have had the infrastructures to play the game and are now putting the accent on developing it. Ultimately, countries like Latin, African and Arab countries are noticing the importance women have as athletes and are putting more and more resources towards it. I personally would love to play in any structure that offers:

1. Good and complete facilities
2. A top management that provides to the needs of women's' and men's' teams equally
3. A team with ambitious perspectives
4. Respectable Income and conditions
5. A fan base is always something great to enjoy as a player

If you can offer girls any advice on football what would it be?

If I can offer girls any advice? Be true to yourself, believe in yourself especially when nobody else does, Work Hard, want more, inspire others to be great. We all deserve it. We all deserve encouragement, especially from someone we can look up to.

Share your ideas by your actions. Inspire. Because actions speak Louder than words. Finally have a true to yourself why. once you find your Why, it is easier to find strength when you need it, and courage when you are missing it.

Good luck to you!

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